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THE
TWO GUARDS



GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS, THE BROADWAY, LUDGATE.

THE TWO GUARDS.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROLOGUE.

It was a delightful evening in summer. The sun was setting, and the soft, refreshing air swept over the boundless prairie, swaying the rich verdure like a sea. Only Illinois could produce such a scene. Four travelers were passing along the plain. The chief personage of the group was a beautiful girl, whose face expressed the gratitude in her heart toward her companions. Through the swiftness of one, the ferocity of another, and the indomitable bravery of a third, she had been rescued from a terrible death. Those companions were the horse on which she rode, a negro, and a hound of great proportions.

The lady, attired in a manner suited to the warmth of the evening, was seated upon the noble animal whose speed had not failed her in the hour of jeopardy. The dog, a powerful and majestic creature, followed at the heels of the negro, keeping his nostrils, which seemed to expand with the approach of the watchful hour of night, close to the earth, that the penetration of his eye might be aided by the keen susceptibility of his nose. The African walked beside his charge. Although one of Africa's sons, he had few of the typical negro characteristics. He was tall and erect in stature, his head was finely formed, his forehead indicated intelligence, and his eyes, jet black, fairly scintillated with the fire of the soul within. He was dark in hue, but his entire appearance savored more of the Arab than of the Zambese, which he was reputed to be. He rested one hand upon the flowing mane of the horse, as he listened to the words addressed to him by his fair companion :

"Why do you not consent to reside with us, Cæsar? Why will you not make the Cedars your home? We love

you, Cæsar—my father, my mother, and myself—and we want you ever near us.”

Cæsar did not respond. He moved forward, his eyes cast downward.

“Cæsar, you saved my life. My parents say their debt is equal to my own, and so is their gratitude. Be one of our household. Abandon that poor cottage so far away, and be to us a friend and a protector.”

“I will t’ink, Miss Agatha, I will t’ink,” replied the negro.

“This time for reflection is but an evasion,” replied the lady; “you reject our hospitality, you refuse our seeming favors, yet you give no excuse for refusing to acquiesce in our wishes.” A tear moistened the maiden’s eye as she spoke.

A drop of moisture fell upon the hand of the negro as this last sentence was pronounced. With a quick, instinctive feeling, he looked toward her eye. The night was now too dark to detect what he had thought to see; but still he knew there rested on his hand a fallen tear, which fell from a cloud upon the brow of Agatha. Though momentarily proud that he could excite such tenderness, he was shocked that he had caused such sorrow, and exclaimed:

“I’ll come—I’ll come, Miss Agatha. I’ll leave de cabin—I’ll leave de garden, ’cause now I knows yer heart is sot on it. An’ yet I loves dat house. It was de first place whar I found rest and peace;” and now the tears came to his fine eyes.

“Thank you, good Cæsar,” exclaimed Agatha; “and now that I have extorted this promise from you, I will acknowledge that there is even more of selfishness in my desire than you conjecture. My father suspects that there is hostile feeling toward us among the Indians. Those chiefs who used to visit us, and exchange their goods for those they more required, and who received from me little presents for their squaws with so much pleasure, now never appear. They avoid our house, and all connection with us. Even Fleet-foot, who used so frequently to run beside me in my rides, and contend in speed with my gallant Matchless, now shuns this frolic pastime, and, whenever seen, disappoints both me and Matchless by retreating to the concealment of wild recesses, whither we can not follow. Then there is the noble

chief whom we call Sachem. He who wore so gracefully the scarf of silk with which I presented him, as if he were my champion knight. He who was so often to be seen advancing through the spreading cedars toward my window, bearing in his powerful arms some tribute of the chase, or other tokens of his thoughtfulness and care, and summoning me, in his deep voice, as the 'Forest Rose,' to come forth and receive the homage of his gift. Ah, Cæsar, my heart is sadly grieved at the indifference and neglect which I now experience from these wild hunters. Their kind and primitive attentions compensated me for many of the pleasures which I once enjoyed in a more peopled region."

The African became interested. He caught every word, as if it were a revelation for his guidance.

"My father thinks they are preparing to be revenged on us for some offense of which we are unconscious, and that you will share our fate. This causes me to entreat you to join us at the Cedars, where you will not only assist in our defense, but be in greater safety yourself. Do you think that the Indians intend us injury?"

"No, Miss Agatha," replied Cæsar, decidedly.

"Nor do I, Cæsar," said Agatha. "There is no such guile in the hearts of Sachem and Fleetfoot, although Jasper says that they are of a tribe of horrid villains; that the racing of Fleetfoot was a mere lure to entice me to some obscure place, and then seize me; and that the affected civilities of Sachem were of the same character, and that these would have been successful, had he not been ever on the watch to defeat their wiles."

"Jasper bad man—deceitful *dog*!" said Cæsar, with energy.

"Cæsar," said Agatha, in a voice rather of reproach than indignation, "do you forget that Jasper is my cousin, who has quitted a far more congenial country, that he might contribute to our happiness, our comfort, and our security?"

"Jasper is de dark shadow of dis region—I knows it!" exclaimed Cæsar, with a wildness which frightened the maid.

She heard his words with astonishment. He was scrupulous never to reassert a sentiment distasteful to her, and she was well aware that, without some vital reason, he would not

thus have repeated what he must have known was painful for her to hear.

Both moved on in silence. Cæsar construed the long silence of Agatha into anger, and became mentally troubled. At length, a gentle neigh from the lady's courser announced his near approach to the welcome stable.

"Ah, Cæsar," said Agatha, "Matchless reminds us that we are near the Cedars. You will come with me to the house, and confirm by your voice and presence the joyful tidings that you will dwell with us."

"No, no, Miss Agatha, not dis night," replied the black.

"Why not? Why should you refuse?" asked Agatha. "My father will scarcely credit the successful pleadings of his daughter, when he hears that you would not move beyond the gate to assure him of the sincerity of your promise."

"Anoder night, Miss Agatha," said Cæsar.

They had now reached the gate.

"Farewell," she said, determined not to press the matter further, "farewell, Cæsar; come to us to-morrow."

Cæsar seemed uneasy. He had something more to say than the mere parting word, and hesitated how to introduce it. Agatha perceived his perplexity, and kindly remarked:

"Are you inclined to proceed with me, that you hesitate to say farewell?"

"No, Miss Agatha; but are you offended wid me?" asked Cæsar.

"In what?" demanded Agatha.

"In speaking badly of Jasper," said Cæsar.

"There is no room in my heart for anger against you, good Cæsar," replied Agatha, with impressive sweetness. "I only thought you misjudged my cousin Jasper; but, in some things, he may be equally unjust to you, though he esteems you as the preserver of his cousin Agatha. These feelings will subside as you are more together at the Cedars, where you will soon learn to do each other honor."

At this moment, a slight agitation was perceptible in the wood through which the road to the house was cut. In an instant, the negro protected his charge, by the interposition of his lofty form. The brave hound, whose suspicious ears had not been slumbering, was by the negro's side, looking up

into his face for some word or signal by which he might leap to the scene of danger, but Cæsar was silent. He looked steadfastly toward the point whence the alarm proceeded. All, however, was in repose. But a noise had been distinctly heard. It was not followed by any receding sound, so there could have been no escape. Something must still be in concealment in the woods. No animal of prey in those parts had the cunning to lie so tranquilly in the face of danger, and the inference of the negro was that it was a man. He thought of Sachem and Fleetfoot, and of the aspersions of the crafty Jasper; but he cast these suspicions from his mind as unworthy either of himself or his forest friends, and was about to enter the wood with his impatient hound, to solve the mystery, when Agatha, divining the next step of the fearless African, whispered in his ear:

"If you value my wishes, good Cæsar, you will not plunge into the wood. I know it to be covered with brush and undergrowth, and might prove fatal to you and your bold hound on this dark night. Let us move onward. There can be no more danger in motion than in standing as we do. But, Cæsar," she continued, perceiving that he was still inclined to the hazardous assault, "wherever you lead there I will follow. You shall be my guide, and whether you seek the danger of the forest, or the safety of my father's house, you shall find a close attendant."

The negro was astonished. He turned and gazed for an instant upon her, and seeing a resolute will through the lines of that face, he spoke to the dog and horse, and all proceeded hastily toward the house. There was still nearly half a mile to travel, and the negro was determined that his fair charge should not pass over this distance unguarded. When they had reached the extremity of the drive, and were near the house, he suddenly paused, and exclaimed:

"Safe now, Miss Agatha."

"Now that you are on our very threshold, Cæsar," replied Agatha, "you will not refuse our hospitality. You will come in."

"'Scuse me dis night, Miss Agatha," said Cæsar, imploringly, as if he feared another such command as kept him from the wood.

Agatha was deeply affected at the earnestness with which he seemed to entreat this indulgence, and replied :

"On one condition, Cæsar, and that easy of performance. Promise that on your return you will not examine the locality where we heard the noise, nor permit your dog to do so."

"I promise," said the negro, after a slight hesitation, but showing evident signs of disappointment.

"Then good-night, Cæsar," gayly added the maid, as Matchless hurried his pace. "I rely upon your pledge."

In another minute, Agatha was welcomed home. Cæsar, walking down the road so softly as to be unheard even by himself, soon slipped into the wood. Casting himself beneath the shelter of a clump of alders, he, with his hound, laid so noiselessly, that they seemed but to add to the deep slumber of the forest. Some time transpired, but no sound was heard. There seemed to be nothing of life around. At length, a distinct tramp disturbed the profound stillness. It approached from the gate. As it gradually neared the place where the negro was hidden, it could be distinguished as the footsteps of a man. It was Jasper Linwood, with a gun upon his arm. He paused, muttering audibly, as he reached the alders which concealed the negro and his dog :

"The black scoundrel, to speak badly of me ! I'd have shot the rascal on the spot, only I'm keeping him for a better fate. His black blood shall yet boil in his veins, from the stripes on his worthless carcass. I would pawn my life for the consideration which she bestows upon this negro, and the other dark skins of the forest. She, so shrewd and ready in understanding in all other things, seems blind to my passion and claims. She does not or will not comprehend that I love her. She cherishes me as her cousin, and all my attentions and my ardent efforts to please her are received as coming from a relative. This I have long endured. I have displayed patience where another might have yielded to resentment ; but patience can not always last. I have laid my plans, and the campaign against negro, hound and Indians will soon open. All these woodland rivals will be among the things of the past. Already the Indians regard Agatha with suspicion, for I have taught them to believe that she is plotting for their ruin. They now avoid her presence, and though

the 'Forest Rose' still pines for her aboriginal friends, they come not to the Cedars. But this black is another creature. I could not besot his dull imagination. But, ha, ha!" and he chuckled quite audibly, "I've applied for more distant aid, and other physicians will soon take his case in hand."

He moved off, evidently pleased at his thoughts.

When he had receded some distance from the alders where he had relieved his mind by his confession, the negro advanced stealthily upon the road. His arm was around the neck of his brave hound, as if to restrain the ardor of his vengeance. His dark brows were knit, the veins of his forehead were furrowed with his anger, his mouth was compressed, and his eyes were lighted with a savage fire. As the fierce eye of the dog met that of the negro, the latter pointed with his finger toward the receding Jasper, and then clutched his own throat, as if to tutor his sagacious pupil in his mission. This lesson given, he still restrained the struggling hound; and, as the better feelings of his nature conquered—even at this deadly moment—he quieted his canine agent, and exclaimed:

"No, no, he's her cousin. I'll not take his life. Leo, dat villain must go *dis* time."

The dog was obedient. The negro stood in the center of the road. The ferocious aspect of his visage gradually mollified into an expression of anguish, and, after painful meditation, he cast himself upon the ground in despondency.

"Why war dis color given to *my* skin?" he exclaimed; "and, being black, why have I de feelings of de white? I is a man, yet I's treated as a brute. Even dat scoundrel Jasper call me de broder of de wolf. 'Tis he is de brute!"

The negro uttered a deep groan as he took this retrospect of his lowly state. He rose from the earth, and, with his dog pressing closely to his feet, slowly moved toward his lonely hut, his figure no less erect because of the great burden of his sorrow. He thought that if in white humanity there were not men like beasts of prey, how should he have been stolen from his native soil, and made the slave and vassal of the thief.

Jasper had reached his uncle's house, and entered the room where the family had assembled. There sat his blooming cousin, but, to his astonishment, Cæsar was not present. He

soon learned from the father how the negro and his daughter had been alarmed, and that the latter had returned without entering the house. Jasper availed himself of this information to impeach the Indians, but Agatha rejected the suspicion with disdain, which caused the early retirement of the traitor. After he reached his room, he paced to and fro in great agitation.

"That negro has my secret. He quitted Agatha for no other purpose than to discover whence that alarm proceeded. He has seen me, and what is probable, may have heard me utter words which must disclose the secrets of my heart. If so, he is now aware of my designs, and I only know too well that he has cunning enough to use them for his purpose. But," he continued, while his face assumed a most demoniac aspect, "the villain shall not use this stolen revelation. He shall die! And if the ravenous wolves are not too dainty to eat black game, they may feast on his carcass before to-morrow night."

CHAPTER II.

CÆSAR.

CÆSAR was of illustrious descent, barbarously so ; still, his birth was illustrious. He was the son of an African prince. He had been seized and borne into slavery despite his lineage. Stolen from the sunny shores of Africa, and disposed of to a New Orleans planter, he was, upon the basis of this felony, claimed as a "lawful" serf. In the vessel that conveyed him from his native shores were many of his father's subjects. They, like himself, had been decoyed into the subtle net of the cruel fowler. Chained and fettered, these miserable creatures recognized their ruler's son. In their reverence they crowded more closely together in their stifling prison that the royal scion might have room to live. Their brutal keepers scorned this imperial treatment, and in their derision conferred upon the royal recipient the name of Cæsar. This was the first trouble of his youth, the incipient calamity of his life, and

it was one of terror. He saw hundreds of his abject friends perish in their chains, and their skeleton bodies hurled from these shambles to the ocean. When a tempest arose, and the decks were battened down for the safety of the ship—and all in that fearful hold was dark as the skins of those that filled it, the plunging of the vessel was terrible to those in that foul prison. The sick were thrown to the extent of their chains, cut and mangled by their fetters at every plunge, while the cries of the wounded, the dying, and the appalled, overcoming the roar from the surging of the sea, created such a scene of agony and horror as none could think possible to proceed from the ravings of human suffering on earth. When the storm abated and the ribald crew had leisure to examine their battered cargo, they opened the hatches and descended to the hold. There were seen chained bodies whose souls had escaped to other worlds; others so severely wounded as to make them no longer a commodity for market; and others, who, despite the bitterness of their anguish, still struggled against death. These were cast into the sea without hesitation or compunction. The despondency of the youthful Cæsar, who escaped uninjured, caused him to envy those who were treated with such dreadful lenity.

In time the vessel reached its destined port.* Cæsar was led from that fetid den into the pure air. It was a grateful change, but the shore on which he was to land was that of the enemies of his race. He shuddered as he perceived that they were of the same color as his sea oppressors; but, he concealed his sorrow, and the cheer which he had spoken to his brethren on the voyage he repeated now; it seemed to lighten the depression of their hearts.

It was soon made known that Cæsar was a prince, which

* From the years 1815 to 1825, many cargoes of negroes were run into Southern bayous, direct from Africa. Large numbers of negroes were also first landed in Cuba, or on some of the smaller and more unfrequented West India Islands, and then run into South Carolina, Florida and Georgia, as opportunity offered. As late as 1840, many slaves were to be found, particularly in the rice region of the Gulf States, who could not speak or understand English—they were so recently "imported." In the case of the ship *Wanderer*, it will be remembered that, in 1858, she ran into Georgia a cargo of negroes direct from Africa. The facts were all clearly proven, the captain, crew and owners known—yet Mr. Buchanan's officials brought none of the scoundrels to justice. Almost the entire South approved the importation, and intimations were given that negroes were thus arriving every year.

was confirmed by his commanding appearance ; and an ambitious planter, who wished to be served at imperial hands, purchased the royal boy ; Cæsar became his slave. With many of his fellow-prisoners he was conveyed to the plantation of his owner, there to commence a life of labor to which he was unused. But, he wisely resolved to submit readily to circumstances which were then immutable, to be an example of obedience to those of his friends who shared his ignominy. He endeavored to bend his stubborn dignity to the menial duties of his bondage, affecting almost a gayety in his labor, believing, in the bright hope of youth, that when he had thus dexterously lulled suspicion, he could escape to his own native land. How little he knew of American slavery !

The plantation was extensive and the slaves were numerous. Cæsar was deeply grieved when he beheld the cruel destiny of so many of his race. He was not, however, summoned to the labors of the field, but was appointed a sort of master of the horse—to which was added the supervision of the kennel. In this character of dog-keeper, he was often in attendance upon his owner and his owner's son, in their numerous hunting-expeditions. He rode with them from plantation to plantation as a body servant, to all the neighboring mansions, and to distant cities. He stored the knowledge thus obtained in his designing mind. Although he performed his duties with scrupulous diligence, and engaged in any extra toil assigned him with apparent cheerfulness, still, he sighed for the freedom and position from which he had been torn. The assiduity of Cæsar made no impression upon his insensible masters. They assumed that that was the consideration for which they had paid, and, had the menial service not been freely rendered they would have proceeded to extort it by the lash.

Three or four years passed in this bondage had unfolded to Cæsar the great difficulty of escape, though it had not driven the hope of this achievement from his heart, when there came a great pressure for field hands. Every domestic slave that could be spared was transferred from the house to the overseer. Still, that functionary had not obtained the "hand" he most courted, and he importuned the planter for yet more aid.

"Why, Flesher," replied the planter, "who can I give you? I have only three or four old crones to attend me in the house and they are deaf, half blind, and stupid."

"Why not the prince?" asked Flesher, sarcastically.

"What, Cæsar?"

"Ay, sir," replied Flesher; "he's young and able, and idles half his day with the dogs and horses."

"But, how will my dogs and horses be cared for?" droned out the planter.

"Let that be my care, sir," responded Flesher.

"Well, well, take him, Flesher," said the planter. "I trust all to your able management; but, remember, if my horses chafe or fret at the absence of their groom, or I hear the impatient howling of my dogs, Cæsar shall be replaced immediately, for I will not have the tranquillity of those fine animals disturbed for a bag or two of cotton."

Flesher quitted the presence of his master. A smile of triumph was upon his face. He hastened to give the necessary orders to impress Cæsar for field labor. The poor slave listened to his doom with affected calmness, but not without considerable inward suffering. He now wanted that fortitude with which he had inspired his brother bondmen in their despair, and for a time he thought to attempt that escape which he had so long contemplated; but, he was not sure that the crafty Flesher might not have prepared for this contingency, and that even then his creatures might not be watching the avenues of flight. There was no resource for the poor slave. Submission or the lash were at his choice. He was transferred to the power of one who would soon compel the free usage of the latter. Thus, the next morning, poor Cæsar had fallen even from his low estate, and was seen marching to the field, with his numerous brother serfs, to gather cotton. From the respectable house-servant, he, the prince, had become the beast of the field.

Each picker had an allotted task. No indulgence was granted to Cæsar because he was a novice. He worked, however, manfully, to discharge this burden, but he would not have conveyed the weight of cotton required to the scale had he not been assisted by his devoted friends. At night the slaves returned their cotton, which was duly weighed. To

the astonishment of Flesher, that delivered by Cæsar was not found to be deficient. An expression of disappointment passed over the visage of the overseer. Cæsar thus had escaped the punishment which the driver hoped to inflict. A suspicion, however, arose in his mind that Cæsar had had assistance, and when, the next night, the fruits of his industry were weighed and found full, Flesher demanded to know if the prince had picked the cotton himself. Cæsar felt that he was detected, although he thought that there could not be an offense when neither he nor those who aided him brought a deficiency to the scale. Still, he would not reply, but stood unmoved and silent before his relentless judge.

"Answer me," exclaimed Flesher,; "did you pick all this cotton?"

Cæsar did not reply. But this silence only enraged the overseer, especially when he beheld the bold front of the dauntless youth.

"Answer," said he, in a voice of thunder, at which all but Cæsar shuddered, "did you gather all this cotton?"

"No," said Cæsar, disdaining an untruth.

"So I've detected you, you idle scoundrel. I did not expect that one who had lounged in the stables so many years would be so active in the field. But now, rascal, who assisted you? Tell me this, that I may know, during this busy time, who are so very skillful and so increase their tasks. I'll turn this discovery to good advantage."

But Cæsar was obdurate. No threats of punishment, no words of violence could extort from him the names of those to whom his gratitude was due, although the kind delinquents stood shuddering beside, in dread of their coming fate. At length the inflamed Flesher dismissed the prince from his presence.

"Go to the stables, sirrah," he vociferated; "look well to the horses and the dogs, and when you have done, come here and receive the wages of your toil. Perhaps *then* you'll mix up with your cries for mercy the names of your confederates."

He drew up the coat-sleeve of the right arm as if in preparation for his hideous work. This was his wont—all knew by that familiar action ~~what was to follow~~—and all prepared to

see their revered fellow lacerated with the lash. It was the last degradation in his cup of sorrow.

Cæsar went to the stable. He caressed his favorite steeds and wept over his beloved dogs. Time had endeared him to these animals, and he was about to say farewell. He had resolved to fly. He was not fully prepared for such a step; but, the merciless threat of the overseer determined him to attempt an escape. He knew that, in a few minutes, he should be sought. Time was, therefore, precious. Still he tarried with his favorite dogs, lavishing upon them all his love and receiving their caresses. Thus he did not withdraw from the stables until success in his attempt seemed almost impossible. But, there are periods in our lives when the faculties of our minds seem for a time suspended as if unequal to the occasion. Then a mysterious Providence takes up the action. So it was in the case of Cæsar, who, apparently waiting with his hounds those precious moments afforded him to escape the dreaded scourge, was unconsciously pursuing the only method to achieve deliverance and prevent recapture.

After reluctantly quitting the stable and providing himself with food, Cæsar moved stealthily from hedge to hedge and field to field until he reached a small copse. Here he paused, and, concealed by the trees, looked back toward the building. Most of the slaves had retired to their cabins; but a sullenness seemed to pervade the scene as if something painful were anticipated. He did not, however, remain long in contemplation. Issuing from the house whither he had been summoned, was seen the impatient Flesher. He approached the stables, and Cæsar was well aware that the investigation there would soon disclose his flight. Dashing forward with all the speed of his young and pliant limbs, after much toil he reached the poor slave's refuge and citadel—the swamp

CHAPTER III

THE CHASE.

FLESHER called upon Cæsar at the stable door in vain. He enforced his cries with threats and imprecations; but, he elicited no reply, though he felt assured that his words were not unheard. Such resistance to his autocratic power was unexampled among these subservient people. He therefore resolved that it should not be forgotten in the approaching settlement. Then he procured assistance and lights, and a search was made; but Cæsar was not there. The search was then extended to other places; the negroes were assembled and questioned: nothing was extracted; and, at a late hour of the night, when every building had been minutely examined, the overseer came to the distasteful conviction that Cæsar had escaped, and that further proceedings must await the morning.

That night, however, Flesher visited the planter. Nothing aroused him from his habitual indolence so quickly as the elopement of a slave. When he had listened to the recital of his overseer—who did not adhere very scrupulously to the truth—he rose from his idler's couch, walked to and fro the room in anger, and then exclaimed:

"We'll have him, Flesher; we'll hunt him to-morrow. He's in the swamp and we'll quickly have him out. I did not think it of the prince. He seemed willing to do his duty. His diligence and attention were observed by my visitors. You have not been harsh with him, Flesher—I mean, of course *unnecessarily* so."

"Certainly not, sir," responded the driver. "I ordered him to the field, as we agreed, and as necessity demanded; but when there, he spent the day in idleness and defiance; he commanded the other hands to fill his bags, and afforded such an example of insubordination as to endanger the conduct of the negroes of the plantation. For this I threatened him, and ordered him to the stable, but without any intention, of course, to use the lash.

"You behaved with great forbearance, Flesher," said the planter. "Obedience *must* be maintained among our slaves. If it be necessary to resort to the whipping-post we must use it upon the man, woman or child who deserves it. We will soon catch this royal fugitive and make an example of him. Summon my friends: at least, inform them that a valuable slave has taken to the swamp, and invite them to join us in the search. Let the horses be ready early. I feel ten years younger than an hour ago. Good-night, Flesher."

At an early hour on the following morning, horses saddled for the chase and dogs in couples were assembled before the mansion of the planter, and there awaited the arrival of the invited guests. The planter, however, attired in a riding-suit, soon appeared upon the piazza. He viewed the preparations with dissatisfaction.

"What have you here, Flesher?" he exclaimed. "Put up that prancing roan and bring me out bay Rolla, for he is the only courser of my stud that really enjoys a nigger-hunt; but he will not run without the music of milk-white Leo, the king of his majestic race, who would detect a runaway were he amphibious, and buried ten feet beneath the waters of the swamp. To Rolla and Leo must be assigned the honors of the day. It is a royal chase, and the imperial Cæsar shall be followed by horse and hound well worthy of his dignity. Ha, Rolla, my brave steed," he continued, as the horse was brought forward, "I learn from your eye that you are up to this day's sport. I hear the ringing voice of Leo, too. He is already on the scent and impatient to be gone, for he knows that, in this day's chase, he is to be allowed to *taste* the game."

At this moment two gentlemen approached the house. They were well mounted, rode side by side; their smiles betokened that they came on some pleasing errand.

"Welcome, friends, welcome," exclaimed the planter, as he shook the new-comers by the hand. "I knew you would not permit me to ride alone. Descend and take refreshments." The visitors passed within the house.

During all this period, Flesher was in agitation. He was alarmed at the manner in which the willful planter had disarranged his plans. He had selected several hounds, and now all were rejected but the favorite Leo, and the recapture of

he slave was to depend on this one dog. He sought Beaumont Tourville, the planter's son.

"I fear," he said, "that this day's work will prove a disappointment."

"Indeed," replied Beaumont; "do you think Cæsar will scape this army of detectives? If he does, he *deserves* his liberty. The prince will then merit a realm of his own."

"What!" cried Flesher, "lose the best slave upon the plantation?"

"I thought him so," said Beaumont, coolly, "but my father tells me that you have reported him otherwise."

"I informed your father that his conduct was mutinous and deserving of a severe example," said Flesher.

"And I dare say," continued Beaumont, "that you also *intended* to the poor boy what the nature of that 'example' would be, which drove him in terror to the swamp."

"I only cautioned him," observed Flesher. "If I did not enforce industry and discipline among these slaves, where would be our cotton or our safety?"

"I never interfere in plantation matters," said Beaumont, lighting his cigar, "but I know that, for three years, when out of your jurisdiction, Cæsar discharged his duties in a manner which did not need that gentle 'caution' which you thought necessary to inflict in only three days' rule. I fear that the poor slave is less a runaway from his owner than from his owner's delegate—that he has taken to the swamp not so much for a love of freedom as from the dread of the whipping-post."

"I did not come to discuss these matters, Mr. Beaumont," said Flesher. "The object is to recover this young scoundrel. For this purpose I procured dogs from Mr. Roy's plantation, but your father has rejected them, and ordered white Leo for the hunt."

"Well," replied Beaumont, "and can that noble animal be equalled on any plantation in the South?"

"But he's known to the game," said the crafty Flesher, "and might befriended the quarry. Would you hint this to your father?"

"Shrewdly suggested," exclaimed Beaumont, sarcastically. "You want me to speak the fidelity of the matchless Leo

to my worthy sire—a charge which you are too prudent to prefer. I decline the mission. If you have any doubts as to the qualifications of the hound, it is your duty, not mine, to intimate them, for, should a disappointment ensue, as you predict, the onus of so great a failure will be attributable to you.”

Beaumont quitted the overseer, and joined the party whom he saw issuing from the house, confident that Flesher would not venture to provoke the storm that would arise should an attempt be made to substitute other dogs for Leo. The overseer was annoyed and disconcerted, both at the refusal and the significant allusions of the son. Still, if he would not address the impetuous father on the tender subject of the dog, he was fruitful in resource, and, determining to provide against disaster, he hastened away to put a more likely stratagem in force.

The gentlemen were soon mounted. Horses and dog, with many attendant slaves, moved toward the swamp. Flesher was some way behind; but, still further in the rear, was a negro, stealing from bush to bush, as if to avoid observation. He was guiding something, which was so closely folded in dark cloth as to be undistinguishable.

The elder Tourville was in the highest glee. No one would have recognized in the horseman who rode that gallant bay, beside his good friend and neighbor Bagot, the inert planter of the preceding day.

“Gentlemen,” he said, “as we ride to cover I may as well relate that Cæsar, the runaway, is said to be a prince. I imported him from the barbarous shores of Africa. His sable father was prince of Wara, and, ages ago, the family are said to have descended to the plain beneath the highest peaks of the Mountains of the Moon. I know no more of his lengthy pedigree. Even this was not narrated by himself, but by some of his father’s subjects whom I purchased with him. It is to be regretted that his ancient lineage is not more fully recorded, for then the tablets of history might have been enriched with the knowledge of the *species* to which this race belonged when they quitted the ark of Noah.”

Mr. Bagot smoothed his flowing beard, a habit he had of awakening his intellectual lore, and was about to open largely

upon the subject of ethnography, when, just at this crisis, Leo attracted attention to the field. The air rung with his cries, and he was seen struggling against the efforts of three sturdy slaves, who, with difficulty, retained him by a thong.

"Soho!" cried the elder Tourville.

"Soho!" echoed the visitors.

"He has the scent," cried Tourville. "Slaves, let go the thongs—give him the run! See—see that noble beast! Was ever deer so beautiful and fleet? There is the promise of recapture in those lungs. Ha, what is that?" suddenly exclaimed the angry planter, as another dog passed swiftly, full on the scent.

Tourville turned to demand some explanation. Flesher had ridden up, and was at the planter's elbow. The sneaking negro was no longer to be seen, though the black cloth, now dropped, might have been seen in the background.

"What means this, Flesher?" exclaimed the excited planter. "Who dares thus to defy my orders?"

"Sir," said the overseer, in his very blindest style, "I'm not less astonished than yourself; but, as the hound dashed by, I saw that it is none of ours. It is a truant from some other plantation, I suppose, and, being fond of the sport, and hearing the bark of Leo, joined in the chase. I much regret the circumstance, sir, but he is no match for Leo. No hound can reap laurels with our Leo in the chase."

These words of adulation appeased the planter's ire, and he responded, in the pride of ownership:

"Yes, Flesher, you are right. Where Leo runs no hound should join the chase that seeks renown."

Young Beaumont Tourville perceived the wily cheat. He saw the cautious negro following in the rear, and was amused at the difficulty the poor slave encountered in retaining in concealment his unruly charge. Then, when Leo gave tongue, he saw the negro dashed upon the ground, and from the dark wrapper issue a powerful bloodhound, who, true to his instinct, followed in the trail of the poor fugitive Cæsar. But Beaumont, as he had before observed, "never interfered in plantation matters," and, on this principle, declined to undeceive his father.

The horsemer now went forward at a rapid pace.

"Look to your safety," cried the elder Tourville, as he flew through the air upon his gallant steed; "the paths are narrow, and the swamp is deep."

They followed the loud baying of the dogs in silence. Yet none rode in that dreadful hunt as did the now exultant Flesher. Every feeling of the animal man was aroused; he intensely *enjoyed* the hunt. His late expression of anxiety and rage was gone; he was now exultant. Bending forward on his panting steed, that his tutored ear might first catch the shriek of the poor victim when mangled by the dogs, he plunged on, like an avenger, to be in at the struggle. He was the type of a "good overseer," while Cæsar, alas, was the type of a bad slave. How pitiless are the tender mercies of the law and civilization which conspired to produce this drama of Cæsar and Flesher!

The hunters had ridden some distance, when a cry was heard. It was an unusual sound—a shriek, a howl, a long cry of agony. Each rider, as if by consent, drew rein in astonishment.

"What's that?" demanded the elder Tourville, looking toward his friends.

"He's caught—he's caught!" vociferated Flesher. "He's struggling with the dogs!"

The whole party were appalled as they beheld his exultant countenance. Tourville exclaimed:

"Why, Flesher, you are mad. You have lost your reason to call that a *negro's voice*. Beaumont," he continued, addressing his son, "you are ever chary of your words, but your judgment is shrewd; what cry was that?"

"I think, sir, it was that of a hound in great agony or death."

"You are right, Beaumont. That is my fear," replied Tourville. Then he added: "Should it be Leo?"

"It is not Leo, sir," interferred Beaumont. "No degree of suffering would force such a cry from him."

"Well said, Beaumont, my son," said the father, with a smile; "your assurance gives me new courage. We will again put our horses in quick motion, and hunt down this runaway."

The intrepid panter now put Rolla to his best speed, and

was closely followed by the others. The clang of hoofs rung through the swamp with a dull, heavy sound, as if they betokened the coming doom of the poor negro whom they hunted. After riding some distance, another halt was called. Spread upon the narrow pathway, and steeped in his own blood, was the dead body of a bloodhound. At a glance, the planter saw it was the strange dog. All stood looking at the lifeless body; but the impatient Flesher could not brook delay.

"The slave has killed the hound!" he vociferated. "Let us ride on! Vengeance is on his heels! Leo is on his trail! I would give my ears to see him brought to bay!"

"Silence, Flesher," said the planter, angered with his intemperate zeal; "if you can not assist us with your reason, do not distract us with your madness. The next step must be taken with deliberation."

A consultation was held. Not a sound was to be heard within the fastnesses of the swamp; not a creature was within view. Yet, by some means, the hound had been slain, and Leo had been appeased. The point where the horsemen stood commanded too large a portion of the swamp to be traversed in the time which had passed from the death-cry of the hound to their arrival; therefore, it was thought that neither the fugitive nor Leo could be far away. A minute scrutiny of the locality was proposed; when, each one taking a circuit, the swamp soon resounded with whistles, cries, threats, and such devices as might contribute to frighten the hidden slave from his retreat, or entice Leo to abandon a silence which, under the circumstances, was not characteristic of his nature.

CHAPTER IV

THE ESCAPE.

IN the interval between night and morning Cæsar had advanced far into the swamp. He was familiar with this dismal refuge of the slave; for, in attendance on his young master, Beaumont, he had ridden through every avenue practicable to horse, and alone and on foot he had explored beyond these limits. He knew the peril which this dark path threatened to the poor fugitive; but it was the only route that promised a way to liberty. As there are hopeful visions in man's deepest grief, so were there slimy acres dotted with islands of high land, which, covered with trees, long grass and underwood, might have afforded security to the runaway but for the un pitying police force of the plantation—the fearful bloodhounds. Cæsar saw this danger, but it did not beget despondency. In his soul were now fully aroused the wild elements of resistance, which had been slumbering from the day when fetters were riveted to his limbs on the shores of his own native land. As the sun announced to him the opening of a day of severe trial, he prepared for the conflict without a fear.

The escape, we may say, was not unpremeditated, although the occasion was sudden. The slave was not wholly unprovided for the event. He had concealed food, clothing and shoes; for, however weighty a burden these might prove to the poor fugitive, he knew that without them he should be compelled to return or perish. He had concealed them in a hole formed upon the high ground beneath the root of a great cotton-tree, and was standing at this miniature cavern's mouth when the sound reached his ear that he was being hunted. He started at the sound, but soon became composed. His attitude of defiance was sublime. "Dere's two or t'ree dogs. I would not hurt dem, but I *must be free!*"

Cæsar drew a knife, the only weapon of defense he had, and without attempting to retreat from such enemies as bloodhounds, he placed himself in a position near the cave, where

to receive the onslaught of the dogs. The hounds came swiftly on ; they were occasionally at fault, when their deep baying resounded like the knell of death. Cæsar stood steadfast as a matadore. He had resolved upon the combat, like one ready for death. His unsheathed knife was grasped by nerves of steel. His hope was to slay the dogs as they came one by one at his throat. Alert as a panther, powerful in limb and steady of nerve, he hoped to end with the dogs, then to escape to his retreat before the riders could reach the spot.

The hounds soon were near ; although unseen, their panting could be distinctly heard through the deep silences of the swamp, followed at some distance by the galloping of horses. Presently one hound came in view ; a few rods only separated the antagonists. Cæsar had raised his arm and poised his fatal dirk ; but his arm became powerless, and the weapon fell from his hand as he beheld the milk-white coat, and the long, smooth, pendulous ears of Leo. He could not pronounce the dog's name. The noble animal recognized his friend, and his insane rage all turned to joy. He almost threw his weighty carcass into the poor slave's arms. The danger, however, was not past. Another hound was on the trail, close at hand. By his notes Cæsar knew it to be no inmate of the Tourville kennel. The weapon which had fallen from his grasp had mysteriously disappeared ; probably Leo's demonstration had thrust it away in the grass. Only a moment remained, and then the strong beast came leaping through the very air. A rush, a clash, one wild, long howl of baffled thirst and of agony, and all was over. Leo had done the work with the celerity of lightning, and the silences came back to the swamp once more, as the negro and hound stood there alone—*free*. Cæsar loved Leo with a love which found expression in tears. He drew the dog's head to his breast and covered it with caresses. The dog was more loving and lovable than man.

The horses soon were heard coming forward with rapidity. Cæsar recovered his fallen weapon, and, rushing toward the cavern's recess, he and Leo leaped into the hiding-place. Wild rose and blackberry vines securely concealed the opening ; the spot really was impenetrable to vision. The hunters coming forward, grouped around the prostrate dog. The fugitive

heard and saw all. None supposed him hidden near the spot and, as they, fortunately, had no other dog at hand, they were unlikely to discover the place of retreat. The absence of Leo, however, was to them mysterious; and when they separated to beat and examine more closely the locality, the frequent cry of "Leo" penetrated to their dark sepulcher to arrest the attention of the dog. Cæsar, however, soothed him by caresses, and by giving him food and water. There was but one summons which the brave hound would not have refused to answer—that of Beaumont; but, as that young gentleman "never interfered in plantation matters" without a special requisition, he declined to utter a word which, in all probability, would have brought the dog to his side, and have disclosed the cave where Cæsar believed himself so safe.

The day, however, closed—Cæsar had eluded detection. The exasperated horsemen reluctantly turned the heads of their jaded animals toward home, inflamed with the misfortunes as well as the disappointments of the chase. The mortification of Flesher was boundless. Like a beast of prey who knew that his game was near, he hung around the vicinity of the dead dog, peering into every nook that would conceal a bird; and though passing and repassing, and actually riding over the cave where Cæsar lay concealed, he was so blinded by anger that he did not perceive a rustling of the brambles at the entrance, occasioned by an attempt of Leo to get again into the light. The slave, however, hastily checked this unconscious movement of the faithful dog, and the danger of discovery was gone.

Cæsar heard the receding footsteps of the horses as their riders went moodily away. When they had ceased, and quietude again reigned in this desolate solitude, he cautiously emerged from the cavern. The sun was setting, and the faint light of retiring day increased the wretchedness of this dark wilderness. The slave, however, was happy—he was free; this was the first day of liberty since he had worn his chains. This made his heart glad, his spirits buoyant, and fortified him against the perils of the morrow. He knew that redoubled efforts would then be made for his recapture—that after the slaughter of one hound and the defection of another, the cruel chase would not be renewed with dogs from the

Tourville kennel, but other hounds would be put upon the trail, and horsemen in greater numbers would assemble. Indeed, he felt that on the morrow he must not depend upon the incaution of the hunters, but upon his own nerve, adroitness and power of endurance. Leo and he must in future be companions. He could not return him. The attempt would be fatal to his escape, and he rejected it.

At a considerable distance from the place where the dog was killed stood a mound of earth, raised far above the swamp. It was covered with trees and underwood, and, being surrounded by marshy land, could only be approached by a single path. That path was so broken and narrow as to render it impracticable to horses; only pedestrians, by the greatest care, could use it. Viewed at a distance it seemed a tempting place of refuge; but, once reached, there were no means of quitting except by the same path. Many poor fugitives had been retaken in this decoy. To this false haven Cæsar now directed his steps, crossing by the pathway, the imperfect state of which, concealed by the darkness of the night, often caused him to plunge into pools, which Leo, by superior dexterity, avoided. When he surmounted these difficulties, and reached the hill, both hastily took the circuit of it, then scrambled among the underwood, getting into every nook and hollow where it was possible to enter, until there were but few feet of this island upon which he had not trodden. This done he retraced the watery path by which he had reached the mound, and returned to the place whence he had started.

Fatigued with the journey, but well satisfied with the stratagem, he again entered the cave. After taking both rest and refreshment, he packed the remainder of the provender, slung it upon his back, and commenced a further movement toward liberty. In doing so, he had either to make a considerable *détour*, leaving a trail that would be detected by the dogs, or cross the swamp where the water was deep, and the earth so spongy and treacherous as to render it unsafe. The moment was not one in which to weigh danger too minutely. There was peril both in the advance and in delay. He unhesitatingly plunged into the swamp. Now came a fearful struggle. Sometimes up to his neck in water, sometimes deep in mud, it seemed impossible that Hercules,

guided by Neptune, could pass through such an ordeal ; but, the spirit of freedom was hovering over his head, her beacons were lighted on the opposite shore, and with the efforts of a giant he reached the solid land to sink down upon it exhausted.

The brave fellow, however, was uninjured. He only suffered from extreme over-exertion. A short period restored him to consciousness and renewed vigor. He found his faithful Leo by his side, and began to experience the first feelings of safety. That bold achievement had destroyed the trail ; and, though the mound was only five or six hundred yards away, it was in importance almost equal to a hundred miles between the hunters and the fugitive. But no fancied security stayed his flight. He traveled until morning warned him to seek a hiding-place. To escape detection it was indispensable to travel by night, and lay hidden by day. A place of safety was selected, and, while the Tourvilles, Flesher, and half the neighborhood were cheering on their hounds, and uncovering, one by one, all Cæsar's abandoned haunts, he and the faithful Leo, wearied with their toil, lay sleeping miles away.

CHAPTER V

FRIENDS IN NEED.

THERE was great deliberation, supported by unflinching courage, in Cæsar's plans of flight. He carefully observed and avoided the errors of those poor fugitives, who, in their anguish, had retreated to the swamp only to be recaptured. The stratagem employed to mislead his pursuers in their second day's chase was founded upon the misfortunes which had befallen others.

Strange hounds were mustered, trained by able negroes ; a goodly assemblage of neighboring planters were ready at an early hour to attend the elder Tourville in his further search for his "very valuable slave." It was arranged that the hounds should not be uncoupled until they reached the place

where the dead hound was found. Thither the whole party journeyed. Flesher was among the first in the saddle. His features were more in repose, and he seemed desirous to conceal those feelings of rage and mortification which were, on the previous day, so fully expressed in his face. As he rode toward the swamp, he took an opportunity to speak to young Beaumont, for he knew that, despite indifference, he was uncommonly sagacious, and might render much assistance in the hunt if his interest could be enlisted.

"Was I right, in reference to Leo?" asked Flesher.

"Certainly you were," replied Beaumont; "there could be no doubt of *that*."

"Then why did you refuse to assist me with your father?" pursued Flesher.

"Assist you!" exclaimed Beaumont, in affected surprise. "Why, you asked nothing. You begged me to take the initiative—to be principal—and to gently *hint* to my angry father that his immaculate hound, Leo, was as disaffected as his slave. But," added Beaumont, sarcastically, "I knew that my refusal would not leave you without resource."

"Resource!" cried Flesher, with rage, while all his old feelings were kindling in his breast, "I can scarcely bear this taunt. I engaged to pay Bob Brindle three hundred dollars if harm came to his dog, and *it is dead!* The black villain shall rue the killing of that dog."

"Why, Cæsar did not slay the dog," said Beaumont.

"Not slay the dog?" repeated Flesher in astonishment, for he well knew that Beaumont did not witness the incident; "then how on earth came the hound dead?"

"That you might have ascertained if you had examined into the nature of the *dogocide*," observed Beaumont. "The dog fell by the fangs of Leo, not the knife of Cæsar."

"And all this you might have prevented," bewailed Flesher.

"And thus saved you three hundred dollars due to Bob Brindle," rejoined Beaumont.

Flesher bit his lips in anger, and Beaumont was about to ride forward when the overseer detained him by another question.

"Where could the slave have hidden himself and Leo. Don't you think they were somewhere near?"

"Certainly," replied Beaumont, "the dog had not been dead two minutes when we arrived. There are plenty of hollows which were not examined, and no doubt they were in one of them."

"And thus the plantation has lost one of its best slaves," said the overseer, "and the kennel its best hound."

"Yet you are the severest sufferer, Flesher," said Beaumont, ironically, "for you are deprived of your revenge."

Flesher was exasperated at this taunt, and at the same time it dismayed him, for it proved that at least one of the planters knew the whole truth regarding the matter. Still, as he saw the young man ride toward some friends, another question hung upon his lips. He dashed forward to propose it. Simple as it was, it was difficult to reduce it to words.

"I think we shall be successful this day?" he suggested with trepidation, as dreading a reply from a source which had much weight with him.

"I think differently," said Beaumont, seriously and with decision. "You have allowed him twelve hours too much time, and although those hours were night, depend upon it, they were not passed in slumber. You will, no doubt, find his abandoned haunts, which ought to have been discovered yesterday, when the game was *there*. But, if I know Cæsar, and I think I do, this noble field of planters, assembled with a whole kennel of hounds to hunt down one poor friendless nigger, will be defeated by that nigger's skill."

Beaumont joined his friends. These were bitter words for Flesher, for, proceeding from Beaumont, whom he thought prophetic, they carried a half-conviction with them. He was musing deeply on this reverse of fortune and dash of hopes, when they reached the place of meeting; the dogs were released, and the work began. The cavern was soon found, and Flesher, perceiving evidence of recent occupation, exulted at the discovery; but nothing followed until two hounds struck the trail which conducted to that peculiar highland in the swamp. The elder Tourville smiled as the hounds headed toward this point, and Flesher began to revive in spirits. He could not restrain his feelings, and dismounting his horse, he, with a few others, followed through the swamp. When he reached that portion called the "nigger's cage," he found the

hounds almost frantic. He soon partook of their excitement, and, as his appetite for the negro was not less provoked than theirs, he hunted frantically with them. He plunged into the thorny underwood, scorning the deep wounds it inflicted, that every inch of bush which could conceal a runaway might not be unsearched. Then he penetrated into holes and hollows which had been excavated into the hard and stubborn earth by the hands of maddened fugitives, who hoped, by this last desperate resource, to escape detection. Thus for hours he scrambled about this narrow ridge of land, expecting every moment to draw from concealment that slave on whom he now was thirsting to glut his vengeance.

At length, utterly exhausted, his clothes hanging in shreds around his body, torn by the thorns which he had so recklessly defied, a number of which were still imbedded in his limbs, and bleeding profusely from almost every exposed place, he fell upon the field of his unnatural efforts, and was with great difficulty conveyed across the swamp. The hunters stood aghast as they beheld this scarcely living spectacle. The elder Tourville, with deep sympathy in his heart for his able manager, ordered him to be borne home with the utmost celerity, that surgical assistance might be summoned. As the slaves prepared to execute the order, Beaumont stepped up to look at Flesher as he lay upon the rude litter—which he thought was not unlikely to prove a bier before he reached home. He remarked, audibly :

“Hard-hearted, unfeeling man! Your intemperate zeal in the punishment of others has to-day fallen upon the worst offender. If you live to digest the moral, may it benefit you much. Cæsar, the prince, has taught Flesher, the overseer, what it is to suffer.”

This incident disinclined the hunters for the further prosecution of their search. Indeed, those who had hounds upon the ground, and were tender of their reputation, maintained that as there was no further trail, unless the runaway had escaped through the air or under the ground to the opposite highland, he must, by some means, have perished in the swamp. Beaumont quietly admitted the two first modes of escape as, at least, improbable, but suggested that the trial would be equally impracticable to hounds if the runaway had

recourse to water. The elder Tourville knew what this implied—that his son still believed both slave and dog to be living. Allowing this, he was convinced the search was too intricate for dogs, and resolved to endeavor to intercept his slave by sending dispatches in every direction.

While these scenes of terror and agitation were passing in the swamp, Cæsar and Leo were slumbering side by side, resting their bodies from the efforts of the previous night, and recruiting their strength for the labors of another. They awoke, however, long before sufficient darkness covered the earth to permit the fugitives to venture from concealment; but Cæsar knew the country where he was—knew the necessity for haste, and, at the earliest moment consistent with safety, he and his faithful Leo started forward. He journeyed in deep anxiety, for, although he had outsped the first great danger, there was another at his elbow—the approaching want of food. How he and Leo were to be supported from the scanty store in his sack he could not divine. This subject he revolved in his mind through the travel of that night, and when the first beams of morning warned him to retire, he had derived but little benefit from the nocturnal cogitation. He, therefore, cast aside the subject, to look around for some refuge from the light. No sooner had he discovered an inviting copse, and was about to bend his steps in that direction, when cries of trouble reached his ear:

“Help—help!” cried a voice. “I sink—I drown!”

Cæsar paused. Those were appalling words, but they were those of a white man, and he so distrusted the unscrupulous race, as to fear that even that cry of agony might be to lure him to his destruction. However, casting aside these feelings, he rushed to the stream ahead from whence the sound issued. A man was struggling in the water. His gun and hat were placed upon the bank, but no person was near. Cæsar, without hesitation, plunged into the stream, followed by the brave Leo. They seized the dying man, and, by their united efforts, landed him upon the bank. He was insensible, and, as the day was fast opening, Cæsar became alarmed for his own safety, as well as the recovery of the man. The only place near, which could afford even partial concealment, was a group of trees, and thither he more drew than carried the

still unconscious man, who, by the kindness and attention rendered him, soon sufficiently recovered to speak his thanks.

Not till then did the poor slave feel the cravings of hunger; but when he prepared to feed himself and dog, his sack was gone; all his entire stock of eatables—to husband which had caused him so much anxiety—had disappeared. The poor fellow's alarm was great. For an instant he forgot his patient—forgot that he and daylight were antagonists, and fled to the river's edge, to save even the wetted remains of his food; but all was gone—all had been sacrificed to the charity of his heart. Cæsar and Leo looked each other in the eye, as they stood on the banks of the boisterous stream.

Returning to the shade of the trees, Cæsar found the rescued man sitting up, his back against a tree, wet and comfortless, but conscious and uncomplaining.

"Friend," he said, addressing Cæsar, "there's a house in the holler, just down there. If you'll help me, I think I can walk that far."

Cæsar's hesitation seemed like unwillingness to assist him further; the invitation seemed so adapted to effect his ruin, that he could not immediately consent.

"Will you do't?" pursued the half-drowned man. "Depend upon it, 'tis the on'y chance I have o' life."

"Den I will," said Cæsar.

And assisting him from the ground, they proceeded toward the forest-cabin. As they crossed the hill, and descended to the valley, they were perceived from the house. A woman came running toward them in great consternation, and was soon informed of the catastrophe. The good dame hastened them forward, and engaged the services of the slave to assist the patient into bed; then insisted upon potations of ho' coffee, which was steaming on the fire. Cæsar, too, was feasted as the hero of the morning, and Dame Richards, forgetful of her antipathy to color, placed him at her own table, and Leo ate until he spread himself before the glowing fire, and slept to aid digestion.

As these soothing remedies had their effect upon the patient, who occupied a room adjoining that of all-work, with the door conveniently ajar, the anxieties of the hostess began to moderate, and her busy tongue commenced to relate the news

of the morning, the chief feature of which was the escape of a slave from the Tourville plantation, for whose recovery there was a reward of two hundred dollars. She said that he had been hunted in the swamp for six days; that, during the chase, he had killed the overseer and several others, and, eventually, had escaped with all the hounds, having, by some secret influence, enticed them to follow him.

"Richards went out this morning with his gun," continued the dame, "to join others who are in his pursuit. It is said that he is a desperate character, a giant in height and strength, and well armed. It is thought he will kill and eat the dogs as he may require them, and thus be enabled to support himself for many weeks. Really," added the woman, addressing Cæsar, "when I saw Tim Ruggles in the distance, I thought that he had you prisoner; that you were that shocking brute Cæsar, and that you had eaten all the hounds but the one which followed you."

A tremor affected Cæsar, as if he had suddenly become old. He could not control its violence, and even the table by which he sat shared in the motion of his body. The hostess paused in her conversation, and suggested more hot coffee; but the warm beverage was no antidote for those chilling words.

Tim Ruggles, in his bed, had heard the marvelous tale of good Dame Richards, as it was intended that he should. He commanded a full view of Cæsar, and was revolving in his mind what might be thought by that black an adequate reward for the preservation of a life; but when he perceived the negro's sudden agitation, which soon increased to terror, produced by Dame Richards' words, a suspicion arose in his mind that this might be the victorious slave referred to. He was deficient in magnitude of structure, as described by the dame, and was not accompanied by the number of hounds said to follow him in his travels as a sort of commissariat; but Tim allowed liberally for the romance of the narrator, and judged less by this means of identity than by the anguish which even that black face could not conceal. Tim called out to explain that Cæsar was still wet from the immersion of that morning, and invited him to his room, where he would supply him with a dry garment or two. Cæsar stepped

through the doorway, and closed the door. Tim rose up in his bed, and, looking Cæsar full in the eye, he said :

"Who are you? Where do you belong? What is your name? *Where is your pass?*"

These startling questions came like a thunder-stroke to the fugitive. The poor slave saw that he was detected. There was a language in the look of Tim that could not be misinterpreted, yet it rather invited confidence than excited apprehension, and Cæsar, feeling that there was no advantage in concealment, exclaimed, with sudden decision :

"I am Cæsar, from the Tourville plantation."

"Just as I thought," quietly responded Tim. "How much of the story you have just heard from Dame Richards is true?"

Cæsar related all the facts to him. When the story was ended, Tim Ruggles exclaimed :

"'Tis well for you, Cæsar, that I fell in the water—well that I *didn't* drown—and still better that you took me out. Reckon me your friend, as you've been mine. I'll do all I can to help you; but this woman's husband would betray you, and so would she, for two hundred dollars. Therefore, don't let her suspect you. Rest here to-day; at night it won't be safe, as Richards will return."

In the afternoon, Cæsar took leave of the loquacious hostess, who cautioned him particularly to avoid the path of that notorious runaway who traveled with the dogs, for that he was bent on murder, and, no doubt, much worse would be heard of him than had been told. But Cæsar did not depart. He had practiced this ruse upon the good dame that he might retire to his friend Tim Ruggles' room, and there await an hour of greater security for his journey. At Tim's hands his plantation "butternut" garments underwent a thorough change, Tim attiring him in a complete suit of his own clothes. Then arming him with a rifle, and a good supply of powder and ball, the abject and dependent creature of yesterday was transformed into the reliant and defiant man of to-day. When he was ready for the march, Tim said :

"Now, Cæsar, take my advice. Think no more of the coast, or you'll be snagged. 'Tain't no use of trying to get back to your own country, for you'll certainly be caught

Two hundred dollars ain't to be picked up every day. Besides, what's the use on't? They're on'y *niggers* when you get there! Sure you're old enough now to think o' settlin' in a Christian country, so that ye may have a Christian death and a Christian burial, and, in course, be entitled to Christian recompense, the same as if your face was white. Go up the Mississip to the West. *That's* the land for you, Cæsar. There's nobody to taunt you with bein' black—nobody to call you a slave or runaway. There you can get an estate as large as the Tourville plantation, if you like, where the land is good, the rivers pure, the timber plentiful, and every thing in profusion, except people; *them*, you know, Cæsar, you must avoid."

Cæsar intimated, at the termination of this oration, that any place of safety was desirable to him. Tim then gave him further instructions, concluding by saying:

"Now, Cæsar, here's a hundred dollars. What, not take it? Then as sure as I'm Tim Ruggles, and you're a runaway, I'll inform agin you. Oh, you're coming down, are you? By Jove, you're making a pretty use o' freedom to thus defy a man. But remember that you have a real hickory friend in your rear, who'll take good care to mislead every one that attempts to follow. Should you be taken I shall know it. Commit no desperate act agin the law, and I'll die but I'll set you free agin afore you reach the plantation. 'Tis late enough now for you to start. Good-by, Cæsar, and don't forget that Tim Ruggles is your friend in every danger. My fine fellow, good-by, too."

Tim shook the hand of Cæsar, caressed Leo, and they separated, both much affected. Cæsar drew a useful moral from this incident, for he reflected that, had he refused to succor that poor drowning man while struggling in the water, because others of his color had done him wrong, he should have been deprived of that assistance which was now the great feature of his hope. He was happier that night than since he had been first manacled in his own land by his captors. He was satisfied with himself, and felt confident in being able to evade the stratagems of his owner. Leo seemed to share his joy, but it is not unlikely that the liberal feed and warm fire of Dame Richards influenced his feelings more than Cæsar's philosophy.

At first Cæsar traveled wholly by night, passing the day in secret-hiding places; but, as the distance from his owner increased, he relaxed in this caution, venturing through such towns as Tim told him were not positively dangerous for a nigger without a pass. But he did not lessen his diligence because he was leaving the Tourville plantation far in the rear. He knew that where there was slavery there was danger to a slave, and that even an idle hour might lead to his recapture. Thus, sometimes by boat, but chiefly by walking, he moved through the lengthy State of Mississippi, traversed that portion of Tennessee which borders the great father of rivers, and gliding over that small portion of Kentucky which separates Tennessee from Illinois, he crossed the Ohio river. There, casting the dust of the Slave States from his shoes, he stood upon the unpolluted soil of a Free State, a free man. It seemed to inspire him with new life. He again breathed the air of freedom—a privilege which he had so long envied the beasts of the forests and the birds of the air. Although this vast region—once the domain of the imperial Black Hawk—was unpeopled, and he was denied the social intercourse which is sought by man, still, as the judicious and practical Tim Ruggles observed in his directions for Cæsar's guidance, it was the fitter refuge for one whose race was seized as the *legitimate* property of the stronger people.

When, with buoyant feelings, he had marched far into this fertile State, he rested at a spot where he resolved to erect a place of shelter. It combined all the advantages of this rich wilderness. The land was fertile, and was dotted with numerous groups of trees, through one of which flowed a stream of pure water. Game of all descriptions invited the skill of the sportsman, and deer disported over the rank pasturage of the prairies in countless numbers. As Cæsar drove the incipient stake of his rude edifice, he clasped his sagacious companion around the neck, and, drawing him to his breast with the deep affection of an Arab for his horse, exclaimed:

"We'll live togeder, Leo. De Tourvilles am no longer on *our* trail. Dis will be our house, and dese our hunting-grounds. We'll live togeder, Leo. Ha, ha, ha!" and his ringing laugh went out upon the air to make sweet symphony with the songs of birds around.

The noble dog returned these caresses with his tongue. The negro was so overcome with happiness that he added nothing to the foundation of his new home that night.

These were two of the four travelers mentioned in the prologue—Cæsar and Leo. They formed the escort of the fair lady in the saddle, and were proceeding from the negro's residence—now called the “wigwam,” and rendered, by the unceasing care of the proprietor, a retreat of much taste and beauty—to “the Cedars,” to which place, it has been seen, they safely conducted her.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LINWOODS.

At the period that Cæsar was traversing the sea from the Slave Coast to the Louisiana lagunes, the Linwoods were migrating from the Kentucky slope of the Cumberland Hills. This family, numerically small, was a branch of an old Virginian trunk. The same erratic spirit which induced it to cross those rugged mountains now urged it to remove yet further from its parent State. The head of this itinerant circle was Mr. Randolph Linwood; his wife, his fair daughter Agatha, and his nephew Jasper, composed the other segments. The last mentioned was the penniless son of a prodigal father, who, having, during a few hours of repentance before his dissolution, whispered some precepts in the younger Jasper's ear, committed him, with no other inheritance, to his uncle. Randolph Linwood welcomed him to his home, and that worthy family made every effort to do their duty toward their nephew.

Jasper soon discovered that his uncle was rich, and his cousin beautiful. He was not long in forming his resolution to win both. Disparity in tastes rendered the capture of the cousin somewhat difficult of attainment. The designing nephew found, to his regret, that the mirthful Agatha, careless of those approaches which usually precede a more direct

assault, should a weak point in the citadel of the heart be discovered, often conferred her sweetest smile upon a rival who had not sought her favor with comparable diligence.

With his uncle, however, he succeeded. That gentleman was devoted to agriculture and the culture of stock, by which most of his wealth had been realized. The mind of his nephew being replete with agrarian knowledge, they soon became kindred spirits. So well versed was the young man in the secrets of the soil, that his uncle generally submitted to the judgment of the nephew.

Of this influence, it is unnecessary to say, Jasper availed himself to the utmost. Denied the right to challenge those suitors of the sweet Agatha whose better fate he envied, he, at length, with consummate shrewdness, determined to use every effort to remove Agatha to a locality where his rivalry should be undisputed. To this end, he was ever disparaging the sterile and rugged acres of their Kentucky home, and expatiating upon the fertile lands of Illinois. His glowing account of the wonderful resources and beauty of that then unsettled region excited, as he well knew they must, the interest of the elder Linwood; and it was not long before the uncle—like Joshua of old—dispatched his servant to this new country, that he might report upon it from his own observation. If so fruitful as reported, he was deputed to make choice of a locality to which the entire household might remove.

Delighted with this success, Jasper started upon his lengthy journey, attended but by two companions. This young pioneer was well adapted to the enterprise. The confiding uncle considered the disinterested and dangerous service in which his nephew was about to engage as dictated by devotion to his family's interest. So well disguised were Jasper's motives, that he believed no one could read the purposes of that scheming and thoroughly unscrupulous heart. His horse was at the door, and his companions were in the saddle. Jasper had bid adieu to his aunt and uncle, when, in an adjoining room, he encountered Agatha. He had wished for yet dreaded this solitary encounter, though he now gladly embraced the moment to test her heart.

"Agatha," he said, "I'm going to the West. I'm going to

seek a better home for you, where the land is rich and the country beautiful. I know your taste, and I shall be guided in my selection as much by that as by what my uncle seems to require."

"Acquit yourself with more honesty and less gallantry, cousin Jasper," replied Agatha, "for I can not esteem civilities purchased with the sacrifice of principle. Do the bidding of my dear father, and I will not demur, although I am well assured that without the exertion of your influence he would have been content to remain in this really fine State, where all our relations have been so pleasant—where I have been so happy."

As she said this, tears came to her eyes in spite of her anger.

"But the land here is not productive, Agatha," said Jasper. "It is not worth tilling, and I'm ashamed of the condition of the stock upon it."

Her allusion to his dishonorable motives he dared not notice.

"No exception can be taken to the condition of my horse," said Agatha.

"No, I see to his rack and manger," said Jasper.

"Nor to those of my father," continued Agatha; "nor to those strong and able animals now saddled at the door, awaiting your pleasure."

"These are our working stock," replied Jasper. "'Tis very different with the neat stock and the sheep. Their skinny figures show how much they require some better pasturage. But I must say adieu, my sweet cousin."

"Good-by, Jasper," said Agatha, as she offered him her hand with evident reluctance.

"Agatha," said Jasper, "you will not dismiss me thus coolly. The journey is long, the travel difficult, and the hardships many. Can't you afford me a few kind words to lighten the labor of the adventure?"

"What can I say truly to you, who have so *generously* designed all these dangers and fatigues for *me*? You are but the *avant courier*. I must be prepared to follow. I must surmount the same toils that you anticipate, and travel the same distance, through the same unpeopled region. I can not

express a gratitude I do *not* feel; I certainly entertain none for the equivocal means which you have adopted to improve my father's lands or his daughter's happiness. Farewell, Jasper. I trust that you will be able to select a spot where there is ample pasturage for your famished cattle."

Agatha glided from the room, notwithstanding an ineffectual attempt by Jasper to detain her. He stood for a few minutes in a fearful state of agitation. Then, summoning his energies, he emerged from the room, apparently unmoved and untroubled, mounted his horse, and started upon his adventurous mission.

Months passed away and no intelligence reached the Linwoods of Jasper; but this long silence excited no apprehension, for those were not times of iron roads, on which men rush from place to place as if wafted by the wind, nor of telegrams by whose magic powers the language of humanity is heard from pole to pole as the echo of the voice. In those days of tardy locomotion, the approach of the traveler was not foretold. He himself generally announced his own return. Jasper's memory was cherished by the aunt and uncle, and nightly the elder Linwood spoke of his nephew as one who had undertaken a perilous journey for his personal advantage. This he endeavored to impress more particularly upon the mind of his sweet daughter Agatha, secretly indulging a hope that through her his disinterested pioneer might be compensated for his faithfulness; but Agatha saw too deeply into the intriguing nature of Jasper's kind offices to be convinced in his favor, and resolved that, should her father approach nearer to the subject than the distant hint occasionally offered, she would at once, though obedient in all other things, declare to him how impossible it was that a nearer or dearer relationship could exist between Jasper and herself than that which made him cousin by being his brother's son.

Still, Agatha was not positively averse to dwell in that distant habitation which Jasper was selecting in unpeopled regions. She loved the primitive wilderness. It was closely associated in her mind with that vast and mighty space into which Adam and Eve were driven by divine vengeance from the gates of Paradise, to become monarchs of the world. She silently revered those boundless plains which the French had

long before named Prairies, and which were traversed a century earlier by the gallant La Salle in search of an outlet from the lakes to the Mississippi.

These romantic episodes in history rendered them classic in her mind. Thoughts of them finally bred a wish to see the "flowing land," and to visit the village of Kaskaskia, which that bold adventurer had founded. It was thus that her consent was won to submit without complaint to the cupidity of her father, and the detected trickery of her cousin Jasper. Although Agatha was truly beautiful, and at the happy age that usually seeks society, she had no vanity to control, nor love of gayety to conquer. She scarcely read the fullness of her grace as reflected in her mirror, and never, for a moment, entertained a thought that it was fitter for the admiration of society than for the seclusion of the wild hunting-grounds of the red-skins.

One evening, as Mr. Linwood cast his eyes, as was his wont, toward the West, he beheld three horsemen in the distance, riding rapidly toward him. Soon they threw their hats into the air, and a loud hurrah told the arrival of the long-absent Jasper and his companions. In a voice that rung through the dwelling and the more remote farm-buildings, he summoned every one to the welcome home. Agatha was not absent from among those who hastened to greet the adventurers.

"Welcome, welcome, my brave boy! Welcome, my good lads!" exclaimed Mr. Linwood, as the trio rode forward. God be thanked for your safe return. We all most heartily welcome you back again."

"Thank you, uncle, thank you, aunt, and thank you, cousin Agatha," replied Jasper, as he leaped from his jaded horse, and caught each by the hand, "and thank you all, my friends. I've found a country 'flowing with milk and honey,' boys and girls, and I'd like to lead you all there."

"We'll follow, we'll follow," responded the assembly, maids and boys, while their ruddy lips moved to and fro in foretaste of luxuries so plentiful.

Then the travelers cast down before the group, buffalo-skins, the antlers of deer, the plumage of the wild turkey and birds of the air, dried fish and other articles. Like the messengers

of the Israelitish Joshua, who crossed the Jordan into Canaan—they had brought evidences of the fruitfulness of the land, and added to these proofs their own assurances that they existed in such abundance as to be inexhaustible. Although Mr. Linwood approved of Jasper's method of securing the services and enlisting the enthusiasm of his domestics, he was too impatient to hear the more detailed account of this fertile region to permit his nephew to remain long in their society; so, leaving this eager crowd to be edified by the two other travelers, he retired with Jasper to the house. After half an hour's audience, both appeared with smiling faces at the supper-table, where Agatha and her mother were already seated. An air of triumph lightened the visage of the returned Jasper and one of delight and satisfaction graced that of the elder Linwood. It was evident that the achievements of the one had met the approbation of the other. The supper passed with little more than general commentaries upon the land which Jasper had quitted; but, when the meal was ended, and the family retired to another room, Mr. Linwood observed

"Jasper has given me a most flattering account of the land which he has visited. It is marvelously fertile. Its boundless plains are varied by gentle undulations, and are dotted with 'islands' of choice forest-trees—God's provision for the farmer's and the builder's need. Man may wade to his waist in pasturage upon which feed countless deer and buffalo. The rivers which flow through this paradise abound in fish; the air is filled with birds delicious for the table; wild water-fowl and turkeys skim over this long grass in vast flocks. This land of promise is beyond the Ohio, west of the Wabash river. The occasion of our good Jasper's long absence was to prospect this great country, up as far as the Illinois river. It exceeds all that he or I have ever heard or imagined. My dear wife and daughter, I wish to seek these rich, wild plains and, in that unpeopled region to establish my permanent habitation. Yet my desire is not unconquerable. Should it meet your entire disapproval, I will relinquish the idea of emigrating from these old hills. Agatha, my love, can you readily quit society, with all its attractions, for those boundless plains where your only associations will be those who may journey with us, and those Indians who are still proprietors

of the soil? Answer, my dear girl, for upon your reply I shall either abandon or embrace the tempting venture which Jasper has this day unfolded."

"My dearest father," replied Agatha, with much emotion at this great proof of her parent's love and consideration, "think not that I have a wish more sacred than the happiness of you and my beloved mother. No society can compensate me for the crime of thwarting a single desire of your affectionate hearts. Only so that I enjoy the fullness of your loves, I can dwell as contentedly in the Illinois wilds as in this settled region."

Both parents approached their daughter to press a kiss upon that glowing cheek. Mr. Linwood attempted to dispel the fullness of his, by diverting the conversation to the deeply interested spectator, Jasper.

"Now, Jasper, that we are in council, we will hear something of the country you extol so much."

"Tis indeed a wonderful country, uncle. Nature is about *double the size* that 'tis in this section. The grass is higher than our corn. The trees whip the air far above a hundred feet. Every animal is large, and idle from actual over feed. The feathered tribe have scarce energy to mount into the air. The deer cantered leisurely away as we approached, then stopped and gazed and cantered a little further; and even the fishes in the rivers lay basking on the surface of the waters, too inactive to move their lazy tails."

"This must be a rare country to which you would decoy us, Jasper," observed Agatha; "but, why did not you and Jake and Gilbert enjoy this great abundance and return at least as robust as when you left instead of the comparative skeletons that you are? And why is it that those fine animals that you rode—so sleek and fleshy when you quitted our homestead—have not partaken of the fatness of this fruitful land? I scarcely recognized their gaunt and bony frames as as they bore toward our house the equally famished horsemen."

"That's an admirable question, Agatha," laughed the elder Linwood. "You have very discreetly brought evidences of the creatures inhabiting this country, but none of their condition," addressing Jasper. "While you contend for the ample

products of the land, you return from verdant pastures with animals as meager as from the most sterile soil !”

“We’ve had a hard time out, sir, both man and horse,” replied Jasper, rather taken by surprise. “We’ve ridden the country over in search of a locality for a settlement. It was only after I had fully satisfied myself I hastened home. It was no want of food that made us all so thin ; ’twas work, incessant, hard, exhausting riding, and night exposurc.”

“Well, well, Jasper,” replied the uncle, merrily, perceiving his chagrin. “I dare say Agatha will admit the explanation as I do, and conclude that those skins which you have brought once were well filled with fat, the grease of those rich pastures you describe ; and that the feathers adorned the bodies of birds of a plumpness worthy of the most fastidious epicure.”

“And that those indolent fishes, which would not wag their tails,” said the facetious Agatha, “were worthy to grace the daintiest Friday dish of his Holiness, the Pope.”

“Nay, Agatha,” said the elder Linwood, endeavoring to subdue his predisposition to merriment, “we must not thus criticise the faithful picture which our good cousin has so graphically portrayed. His task was most arduous, his labor well performed.”

“True, sir,” interposed Agatha ; “and as we can not receive these slender men and horses as evidences of the victualizing and grazing resources of the land they represent, we will attribute their spare condition, as you suggest, to the toil they have encountered in our behalf. And now, cousin Jasper, as you referred to your efforts to select a spot worthy of a residence, may I ask if you have succeeded in this attempt?”

“I did,” replied Jasper, only half conciliated.

“Where is it?”

“Far up in the country—the Illinois country,” replied Jasper.

“Is it well situated?”

“Beautifully,” exclaimed the cousin, in a tone that showed his ire was thawing beneath the sunshine of her smiles.

“Then is it not upon the open prairie?” remarked Agatha.

“The place I’ve selected is in a wood surrounded by prairie

lands; and I've fixed upon a green hill in this pigmy forest as a site for the dwelling-house. There are growing, at convenient distances, some of the most magnificent trees I've ever seen, both in height and spread of branches; and in the intervals, deer and smaller animals, wild turkeys and other fowls, stroll fearlessly. At a short distance from the hill is a river which abounds with fish, and beyond this is some of the richest land I ever beheld. Indeed, cousin Agatha, it is a delightful place. I stayed beneath those trees a week to refresh the jaded men and horses, and each day I became more devoted to the spot. I'm sure that you'd not be less enchanted."

"I have already an affection for this unseen land," said Agatha; "but tell me more of it. Is the hill lofty? What view is there from it? There are a thousand such points as these which appertain to the description, and which I want you to relate."

"The hill is gently sloping, and rises above the trees. It is covered with grass, and from it can be seen no end of prairie-land, with its long and undulating grass, rocking to and fro in imitation of the ocean, and which are so boundless that the sun rises and sets upon this vast savanna."

"Of what species are the trees?" asked Agatha.

"Cedar," replied Jasper.

"Then 'The Cedars' shall this new place be called. Dear father, have I your approval?"

"The name is well chosen, Agatha, and characteristic," replied Mr. Linwood.

"Thank you, dear father," said Agatha; "but where do you propose erecting the dwelling-house?"

"There is a wide ledge or space about half way up the hill, which is well defended from the winds of winter and the heats of summer by the spreading cedars. Here I thought would be an eligible situation for the house."

"And thus leave me the summit for an eyrie," quickly interposed the excited Agatha; "for, over the lofty point I shall claim sovereignty. None shall ascend the hill beyond the plateau where the house is built without my permission, for I am a jealous ruler, and will not brook the slightest innovation upon my domain. The frontier line of my government shall be the circle of the house; and thence to the

apex of this puny mountain shall appertain to Agatha the First. I will build a mimic palace for the residence of my royalty. There I will sit, and meditate, and ponder on this wild portion of our massive world, which, within my extensive range of view, may contain no other occupant than ourselves. And when the sun sinks below the horizon to give day to other regions, I will gaze from my palace windows upon the mighty vault of heaven, that I may behold those glittering worlds as they pierce its azure vestment and appear in countless numbers to add glory to the night. Then, when all is profoundly still, and I am alone with Him who created, at a word, those brilliant emblems of his mightiness, will I devoutly bend my knee and implore that he will so guide my path that I may in after life be qualified for a student in that sublime school where the mechanism of the heavens is gradually unfolded." She spoke as if enraptured, and unconscious of her utterance.

A pause ensued, for the latter words of Agatha had a visible effect upon all present, who were as much affected by the reverence of her manner as by the deep feeling exemplified in her words. Mr. Linwood was the first to break the silence.

"You shall have your mountain empire, my dearest Agatha, and your frontier line shall be where you place the landmark. The laws which you prescribe shall be obeyed; and even if a dotard shepherd should seek his pet lamb upon your domain under the pretense of protecting it from the damp of night, he, too, shall be amenable to punishment."

"No, no, sir," replied Agatha; "both shepherd and shepherdess shall have free access to our coverts; but, I can promise that the lamb will never quit the fold if its absence causes anxiety."

Conversation of a cheerful character proceeded for some time, during which Jasper enjoyed his victory. He found that all were inoculated with a desire to remove to the land of plenty which he had described. Agatha seemed to him the most ardent of them all. It was at length resolved to dispose of the present farm, to purchase more stock, and to take an early leave for the new home.

Time sped swiftly and affairs progressed amazingly. The

farm was sold; additional cattle purchased; every thing of usefulness packed; and, on a certain day, man and beast formed a caravan of great proportions, to migrate to this Promised Land.

CHAPTER VII.

ROUGE ET NOIR.

WHEN Cæsar had reared his cabin upon a portion of the plain once the domain of the imperial Black Hawk, he knew not that any of that race from whom he had fled shared with him this boundless realm. As he receded from the Ohio toward the north, he had met nothing in human shape, and the poor slave thought this land the fitter place for him, because not yet occupied by a people who esteemed his color as the brand of bondage. He did not suspect that the river from which he and Leo drank supplied a beverage to a family of white people, nor that those trees in the distance, the crests of which he could just distinguish as they waved in the breezy air, sheltered a band of those people to whom he had attributed all the sorrows that he had endured.

In this happy ignorance he commenced the construction of his home. It was a humble edifice, composed of light timber, branches, and long grass interwoven; but it was ingeniously substantial, and its uncouth exterior of logs and mud was soon hidden by its floral garniture. He covered it with that beauty of Western wilds, the prairie queen rose and the wild honeysuckle, both of which he found ready planted on the sweet spot chosen for his cabin. He had also chosen the site with a taste for the picturesque, for the vicinity of his wooden castle was dotted with groups of lofty trees; and in good time he streaked the ancient beauty of the landscape by his garden, his rude fences, and his cultivated patches of corn.

In the possession of this snug residence Cæsar began to enjoy happiness. The fear of recapture had passed from his mind when he first breathed the free air of the prairies, and

with the amusement of pursuing his improvements, and the gratification of afterward surveying them, his cravings to return to Africa had lessened. But, the great source of his felicity was Leo. Cæsar owed his life to the hound's faithfulness, and the grateful feeling was ever in his heart. Indeed, those lonely tenants of the rich wastes seemed to esteem each other's society as one of the principles of life. They were ever together. They followed in the chase, and at the same table ate the produce of their skill. They sat side by side in the garden in the hours of idleness and relaxation; they drank from the same river, and slumbered upon the same bed of dried grass. Leo was full of faith—Cæsar was laden with gratitude. With these feelings uppermost in their hearts, the man and brute became associates. The one was ready to defend the other with his life.

Cæsar and Leo had just partaken of breakfast one morning, and were preparing for the chase, when a growl from the latter apprised Cæsar of some danger near. He turned toward the hound. The ferocity of his eyes and his distended nostrils intimated that the peril was of a novel kind. Directing his attention toward the spot upon which Leo bent his eyes, the black recoiled in astonishment. At some distance from his cabin was a group of trees, and, standing by the trunk of one of the foremost, was a human figure—the first that Cæsar had seen since he entered the wilderness. It was that of an Indian, who was intently gazing upon the cabin. Cæsar, perceiving that the Indian was not of the race of his oppressors, hoped to find sympathy in his heart, and approached him.

The Indian stood erect, with a rifle in one hand, impassive to Cæsar's peaceful challenge of "reversed arms." Then Cæsar placed his rifle upon the ground, and advanced some distance beyond it, but the stoic was equally insensible to his demonstration. Poor Cæsar was sadly troubled. He knew of no other means of expressing, in the distance, his wishes to conciliate. The impatient Leo was growling his anger at the motionless stranger, when the Indian, as if suddenly awakened to all that had occurred, advanced, placed his rifle upon the earth, and continued his approach unarmed. Cæsar responded. As they met, the Indian exclaimed :

"Brudder!"

The words struck the poor slave's heart, and brought tears into his eyes, for such language had not met his ear since he quitted the banana groves where he was born.

"Brudder!" replied the delighted Cæsar; and their hands were grasped in friendship.

"Did my brudder come from dere?" asked the Indian, pointing toward the south.

"Yes," responded Cæsar.

"Am not my brudder people de slaves of de white people?" asked the Indian.

"Dey are," said Cæsar, in some apprehension.

"Den why my brudder here?" quickly rejoined the Indian.

"Dey stole me from my country," said Cæsar; "dey bring me across de great salt lake to deir plantations, and make me slave. Den dey force me to work—goin' to use de lash and den I 'scape."

"Good!" said the Indian, with evident satisfaction. "Injins like *dat*; Injins like bold man. Now you ask room in de hunting-grounds of de Injin?"

"Yes," replied Cæsar, with feelings of relief at these words of approbation. "For me dere is no oder place of safety. I has no oder home."

"Brudder, welcome!" said the Indian. "Brudder safe in him wigwam. Injin no trouble him."

Cæsar was delighted. Leo, sagacious and penetrating, no sooner perceived the satisfaction of Cæsar, than he claimed friendship with the stranger. They together walked in silent gladness to the cabin. There the Indian listened to the history of Cæsar's sorrows, then partook of refreshment, that the hospitality might be complete. Afterward they proceeded to the chase together, where the dexterity and powers of the noble hound excited the Indian's admiration. In the evening they returned, exhausted from the hunt, and that night the Indian—the Sachem of his tribe—reposed in the wigwam of the slave—the red-man and the black slumbered upon the same rude pillow.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CEDARS.

THE Linwoods reached their destination on the prairies with their herds, and flocks, and boys, and maidens. A few interludes of misfortune clouded the sunny journey, but they were lightened by the merriment of Agatha, and soon repaired by the untiring energy of Jasper, who, as captain of the caravan, discharged his onerous duty with zeal and ability.

Agatha found all the animals in this new land that had been enumerated by her cousin—all except the noble buffalo; but they were far more coy and nimble than described by that historian. The birds were strong on the wing and shy, the deer were fleet of foot, and the fishes, which he had represented as too obese to move their oars, were found as adroit and active on the approach of a shadow as any other tenants of the water.

But there was a nobler creature indigenous to these plains that Jasper had not named in the verbal narrative of his travels. Whether he thought that the knowledge of this circumstance would prejudice his uncle and Agatha against the locality, was never known; but he concealed the fact, that, not very many miles from the site he had selected, was the village of a tribe of Indians. This was soon discovered by the great explorer, Agatha, who, during the erection of the house, took lengthy rides into the plains. On one occasion, to her great wonder and alarm, she rode into the center of a city of wigwams before she was aware of the indiscretion. A cry instantly filled the air from urchins, squaws and braves. This would have effectually urged her good steed to his fleetest pace, had not two powerful red-skins seized the bridle-rein, and restrained her horse. A crowd of dark faces gathered around her, and she had nearly fallen in terror from the saddle, when a stately Indian approached, and silencing the chattering of the women and children, addressed her in the kindest manner:

"Do my white daughter seek the wigwam of the Indian for help?"

"No, noble chief," replied Agatha, recovering her self-possession instantly, "I seek no help. I came by accident to your village. My friends are some miles from here, in the wood of cedars, where they are come to dwell."

"Do pale-face want *more* hunting-grounds of Injin?" exclaimed the chief, in anger. "Why pale-face come *here*? If Injin go take pale-face city, pale-face *kill him*! What Injin do if pale-face come take Injin plains?"

"Oh, you mistake, good chief," said the now frightened Agatha; "we come not to forcibly take your hunting-grounds. We come to buy them—to pay you for them all you can require. We are friends, good friends. We want to be your neighbors, and add to your comfort. I am the daughter of the chief, who loves me dearly. He has brought with him oxen and horses, and other things useful in your settlement, and if you allow me to depart, he will give you liberally of these animals."

There was such equity in these words that they cleared the anger from the visage of the chief, and replaced the smile; but, with the thought of the skillful diplomacy of the whites, and their falseness to the Indian, he shook his head, as much in incredulity as in sorrow, that even their women should share in their arts. But Agatha, imagining herself in great jeopardy, exclaimed:

"Come with me, noble chief. Bring with you a hundred of your braves, if so you wish it, and I will lead you to the tents of our small host. There deliver your judgment, and claim your reward as my ransom. If you desire that we leave these prairies, we will depart; and if you demand every living animal that we have brought here at such great cost, except those that may be needed for our conveyance back, they shall be delivered to you. Of this I pledge my faith, as I am my father's daughter. And, if you are a father, you know what such a parent can sacrifice to regain his only child, and will not keep me longer from my home."

The chief stood in meditation for a time, as if to weigh the language of Agatha, when suddenly he signaled to the men

at the horse's head, and they yielded their hold. Agatha was free.

"Go, daughter, to your people," said the chief. "Dat Cedar"—so the Indians ever after distinguished the elder Linwood—"noble tree wid *such* branch. De Cedar welcome to de prairie. Him daughter words sweet. Dey change Injin's heart of fight to heart of peace."

Agatha did not move. The liberty for which she so earnestly supplicated she did not use when it was conceded. She was deeply affected at this generous conduct.

"Great chief," said Agatha, "such men as you and my dear father should be known to each other. Come with me, then, that I may show him what I have found in the wild prairie, where we thought that nothing was more precious than the land."

"Oder day, good daughter," replied the chief.

"This day, I implore, great chief," continued Agatha. "Let me complete my happiness this day. Let not another sun appear before you see my father, that our friendship with you may date from the same day."

The chief could not withstand the seductive smiles that dwelt on that sweet face; his stoic nature yielded, and, attended by a favorite brave, the fierce Sachem was led in loving chains toward the Cedars. Agatha had now surmounted her alarm, and maintained an animated conversation with the chief as they pursued their way. He replied to all her questions, sometimes in simple ejaculations, sometimes in figurative language, but always in a decorous and graphic manner. The time passed so agreeably that they had reached those venerable and lordly trees, which gave a name to the estate, without Agatha being aware that they had advanced so far, although neither the Sachem nor his esquire had been so unobservant. The former now called her attention to the deep shades which they were entering.

The long absence of Agatha had occasioned some apprehension in the minds of the Linwoods. Jasper had enlisted several men to join him in a search, when his cousin appeared before them, her horse led by two Indians. Jasper frowned, but Agatha, to divert the attention of the Indians from his dark face, exclaimed:

"Where is my father? Tell him an Indian chief has come to welcome him to the prairies."

Mr. Linwood soon appeared. He was rejoiced to see his daughter, but he scarcely felt pleasure in seeing her thus accompanied. Loneliness and isolation he could endure, but he dreaded the vicinage of these aborigines, whom he had been taught to regard as cunning and faithless foes. He resolved, however, to mask these prejudices. In meeting these red visitors, he would only exhibit a desire to conciliate their friendship, and not to exasperate their passions. But the instant he appeared the chief advanced, and extending the hand of peace, exclaimed:

"Welcome, Cedar, welcome to hunting-grounds of Injin. Deer many for Injin and white man. No anger—no hate—no fight."

"Worthy chief," replied Mr. Linwood, "I have no such feelings in my heart. I come to your lands, not so much to indulge in the chase and use your hunting-grounds, as to feed my herds and flocks upon your pasture, to increase their number, and to cultivate so much ground as will provide for my people, and also the cattle in winter. This privilege I wish not to enjoy without making remuneration, though when I left my own home I did not know but that these lands were abandoned by your people, and left to the enjoyment of wild animals."

"De Cedar sow him corn and feed him cattle. Injin call him friend," replied the chief, with an assumption of much dignity.

He intended to convey that all he desired for the privileges granted to Mr. Linwood, was to remain in friendship with them, and that the bickerings and enmities so frequently occurring between their races might be prevented. He repudiated the notion of payment, and he hoped this would be acknowledged in efforts to promote peace and good feeling. Mr. Linwood fully comprehended his Indian visitor, and now thought that the neighborhood of such an ally would be rather an acquisition than a terror. After some further conversation, Mr. Linwood conducted the Sachem to his tent, and offered him refreshment. Then he explained to him his plans for a home, and Agatha's for an eyrie, and called the chief's attention

to his well-selected stock, which grazed upon the fattening pasture in the distance. But it was evident to the speaker that the listener did not now view these things for the first time. The wary Indian had been well informed of all his doings and of his possessions, although he had held himself aloof for reasons of his own, which might have been hostile, until the eventful appearance of Agatha gave another direction to his impulses, and laid the foundation of a friendship which was advantageous and agreeable to both.

Under the daily greetings of the Sachem and his braves, the house was reared, and, by their guidance, the cattle were led to the most nutritious pastures. The fair Agatha was the favorite of the chief. He related to her, in his wild, rude way, the traditions of his country, and the legends of his tribe; then he would bewail, with pathos and deep feeling, the low estate to which the aborigines had fallen. Sometimes, when the Sachem lamented, with great despondency, the decadence of his people, Agatha would endeavor to impress upon him that the strength of the white man was in the peaceful application of his powers—that war was not his occupation, but his necessity—that the white did not live and die “a brave,” but that the greatness which had made him the ruler of the world was derived from the arts of peace and not from the sword. A melancholy smile would pass over his face, as he listened to his fair monitor, and then he would reply, repressing that fire which, for the moment, burned within his heart:

“Do daughter of great Cedar forget how white man got hunting-grounds beyond de lakes? Wid fire and sword him drive back buffalo, deer, turkey, Indian—all dat wanted life and room to live. *Dat no art of peace!*”

To this Agatha would reply that the white man rarely drew the sword against the red until obliged, for that the latter, having no other occupation than that of war, were generally assailants. But the Sachem would respond, with acrimony, as if he thus divined the foundation of the evil:

“Why not white man keep home, in his own country?”

As this question involved the right of colonization—the right of a crowded, impoverished people to seek an asylum in a land with but a few rude occupants, who were reared to no

other pastime than the chase, Agatha rarely responded; and the Sachem, with the smile of victory, would end the conference.

But it was not alone with the good Sachem that Agatha was so much esteemed. She was beheld as an angel by the lesser majesty of the tribe—the chieftain's squaw. Indeed, she was beloved by the whole village, for there were few wigwams the inmates of which did not possess some evidence of her kindness, and she never permitted the union of a brave and maiden to take place without adding some present to the rude *trousseau* of the bride.

Months grew into years. Mr. Linwood's stock increased and fattened, his crops were abundant, his improvements had converted the Cedars into a handsome and well-ordered residence, his Indian friends had remained as kind and truthful as the day on which they first appeared at the head of his daughter's house and presented the hand of peace. This was a pleasing retrospect for the worthy settler; but—and how much happiness is shattered by this conjunction—one circumstance oppressed him—the increasing moodiness of his nephew.

Jasper by degrees had become discontented and sullen. He discharged with energy every duty of the farm, and saw that others were not less diligent; but he no longer felt the pleasure in these pursuits of earlier times. Every thing seemed to prosper but his suit with Agatha; that was daily on the decline. In these wild plains, where he had hoped that she would have to rest upon him alone for diversion, she found more amusement than in her old home. Without Agatha he could not inherit the uncle's property, which he now grew to regard as partially his own. Yet, how could he obtain her? Although not repulsed by word of mouth, he was kept at a distance by her manner. The sweet smile that ever graced her countenance when the Indians were in her presence subsided when they departed and she was left alone with him. At other times, when he sought her, she would escape to her eyrie on the summit of the hill, to which he was denied the *entrée*, and thence gaze upon the prairie or upon the stars, rather than on him. He was jealous—furiously jealous; this

made him sour, misanthropic, which by no means advanced him in the favor of his cousin.

Mr. Linwood had long observed this gloom in Jasper, nor had it escaped the penetration of his wife. They imagined the cause, and deeply regretted the indifference of their daughter, for both had hoped to see her united to her cousin. After much consultation, it was judged best that Mrs. Linwood should speak to Agatha on the subject. Accordingly, when mother and daughter were together, busy with the needle, a fitting time for the exchange of confidence came.

"Agatha, my love," commenced the mother, "you seem to treat your cousin with much indifference."

"Then my conduct, dear mother," replied Agatha, "well represents my feelings."

"But you scarcely treat him with the kindness due to his relationship," said Mrs. Linwood.

"I fear he would not be content with that, dear mother," replied Agatha, blushing.

"Why think you so, Agatha?" said Mrs. Linwood. "Has Jasper said aught to you of any other feeling?"

"No, mother," said Agatha, with eyes depressed; "I have maintained all this indifference to prevent it."

"But, Agatha, he is your father's nephew—his own brother's son," said Mrs. Linwood.

"Yes, mother," placidly responded Agatha, "and therefore my cousin."

"A faithful steward and adviser," continued Mrs. Linwood.

"No doubt, mother," said Agatha.

"In fact, our right hand in this wilderness," said Mrs. Linwood, "and one, dear Agatha, whom your father and myself would rather call son than nephew."

Poor Agatha feared what these skillful approaches of her mother were tending to; but she was not prepared for such an undisguised avowal of the wishes of her parents. The needle and the work which she carelessly held now fell from her fingers. She concealed the deep crimson of her face with both her hands, and from beneath she exclaimed in sobs:

"Mother, dear mother, you would not sacrifice your daughter's happiness to her cousin Jasper's ambition."

"No, no, my love," replied Mrs. Linwood, much affected, neither I nor your father could sacrifice you to any thing."

"Then do not urge this matter, mother," continued Agatha, for I should not have another day of happiness."

"Comfort yourself, my love," said Mrs. Linwood, rising and passing her arm around the neck of her daughter, "I did not think thus to distress you. To us your happiness is every thing, and we would not wish you to take any step, if this could not be secured."

The interview was ended and Agatha was glad to make an early retreat to her own room. In the morning, as she stood waiting for the assembling of the family to breakfast, her father entered. Agatha looked timidly at him; he smiled affectionately, placed his arm around her waist and pressed a kiss upon her cheek. He did not speak for Mrs. Linwood, and Jasper entered; but Agatha understood it all. He had heard the truth. He approved her conduct, and that paternal kiss restored her to tranquillity and joy.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WOLF COMBAT.

THE cabin of Cæsar was a pleasing feature on these wild prairies, and the garden was not less attractive by the taste and industry of its owner. It was studded with plants collected from the plain, and, if they were somewhat deficient in floral radiance, they more than compensated for their want of beauty in their fragrance. The poor slave here found some solace for his sorrows, and he felt grateful that he could dwell with the only friend that misfortune had left him—the faithful Leo.

In summer's evenings, when the obligations of the chase or the labors of the garden or the field were ended, Cæsar and the hound would cast themselves upon the green space that formed the lawn, whence the slave watched the mechanism of the heavens with wondrous awe. He recognized the monarch of the night as the same which dispelled darkness in his

own far country, for he had seen it there. He had been taught that it was the searching eye of a great presiding power, and that the stars were its less brilliant subjects, and that nothing escaped the severity of its penetration. Thus he believed that his abduction from his country had been seen—that the fetters he wore and all he had endured had not been overlooked, and his escape and safety were aided and chronicled by that great eye. There was devotion in his theory, and he was persuaded that some power subordinate to the eye had guided him to the prairie, where he awaited some event yet unfulfilled.

Thus Cæsar watched with veneration the shining moon as if to gather instruction from its phase—he and his hound—as if one thought directed the two hearts. One night they reclined together on the sward. The hour was late; the wolf the panther, and other beasts which seek their prey at night were out on their dismal errands; a scream so frightful traversed the air that both man and dog leaped from their downy couch. It was like the last cry of life, and was the most appalling sound that Cæsar had heard in that secluded wilderness. In his superstition he doubted whether the voice were mortal—fearing that it was the wail of some poor sinner whose soul was passing on to punishment. But, he was soon divested of these imaginary apprehensions, for, as he listened with intense attention, and placed his hand on his heart to calm its agitation, a second shriek, no less terrible, but nearer rent the deep silence of the air. Phantom or mortal, he could remain no longer there. Half awed, half animated, yet wholly resolved, he bounded over the fence and rushed in the direction of those piercing cries. The faithful Leo, who had been watching Cæsar's motions, leaped to his side unsummoned.

Never was prairie crossed so rapidly by man. There seemed a rivalry between man and dog; in their paces they were coequal. He advanced toward a distant wood, the deep shadows of which inclosed all in obscurity; but, just as he reached the margin of the trees, another of those thrilling screams disclosed a scene more terribly real than his fears had pictured. Flying along the glade where it opened to the plain was a horse bearing a lady on its back. At the very heels of the terrified animal followed two ravenous wolves, intent on

capture. Without a howl to mark their course, but with outstretched mouths and craving appetites, the monsters pursued both horse and rider as their victims. The horse, a noble animal, affrighted but not disheartened, ran gallantly for his life and that of his fair charge, while the lady seemed overcome with the horror of her position. It was plain that the wolves were the stronger in the chase, and that they must have gained considerably upon the horse since that first scream was uttered. As Cæsar and his hound appeared, the crisis had arrived. The foremost wolf, which seemed the abler brute, at that moment made a spring, and missing the horse's flank, seized the dress of its fair rider; the next instant placed that rider on the earth. Cæsar saw the greatness of the peril; and, although he was armed only with a club, with a loud yell that attracted the brute's attention from the lady, he rushed to meet his foe. In an instant Cæsar and the wolf were in deadly struggle. At this moment the moon, which had been hidden, broke from a cloud and shone with greater brilliancy. This was the great, good Eye that Cæsar revered. It lighted him to victory, for under its influence he was armed with the courage of inspiration. With a fury greater than even that of his remorseless antagonist, he conquered the monster and laid him dead at the fair lady's feet.

Leo had not been a mere spectator of the scene; he took care that the second wolf should not make the fight uneven. He engaged this rapacious enemy. The struggle was protracted and desperate; just as Cæsar was approaching to the assistance of his valiant Leo, the wolf fell at his feet, dead. The battle-field was won, but the victors were bleeding copiously from gaping wounds.

During the struggle the lady had remained upon the ground. She had seen the commencement of the combat; but she could not believe the black and dog who so suddenly approached were her defenders. To her troubled mind they seemed little less hideous than her assailants, and she anticipated no mercy from the winner. Thus she withdrew her eyes from the strife, and with uplifted hands supplicated for protection; the howls and cries of the bleeding and mangled combatants were unheard by her. When the struggle was over, and Cæsar and Leo stood before her whom they had

rescued, the blood still trickling from their wounds, she was unconscious of their presence. Cæsar was awed at the devout picture he beheld—a statue, save in the prayerful movement of her lips. Her eyes, her hands, her thoughts were upward turned, and naught but Heaven seemed to occupy her mind. Intellectually she had quitted life, for her faculties were so deeply chained that danger and preservation were alike forgotten. Poor Cæsar was speechless with the sublimity of the impression; he stood gazing upon Agatha, with the faithful hound beside him and their victims at his feet, awaiting recognition, yet fearing that he was unworthy to be greeted by the angel form that he had saved.

Some time had passed—unheeded by these mute figures—when a horseman was perceived approaching at a reckless pace along the glade.

“Agatha, Agatha,” the desperate rider cried, and as his voice reverberated like thunder in that silent wood, Agatha was aroused from her unconsciousness. She now perceived the horseman advancing in the very track of the dreaded wolves—and she knew him. She saw almost by her side the powerful black besmeared with the crimson of his own veins, and the hound, but little less terrible than her first assailants, now that his mouth and body were bathed in blood; then, as a shudder of horror passed over her, she cried:

“Jasper, Jasper, save me!”

“Depend on me, Agatha,” replied the furious horseman, as he reined up his steed, and presented a pistol at Cæsar. There was a flash but no report. The pistol was unloaded or had missed fire, or the valiant Cæsar would have been leveled with the wolves. But, this action elicited a scream from Agatha. She began to entertain a clearer comprehension of the horrors of that hour. Pointing toward the two dead wolves, she cried:

“Jasper, see there! This is the brave man who saved me!”

Jasper looked savagely at the black, as if he had done a mercy not assigned to him—as if he had himself been thus deprived of helping one who cried to him for succor. He seemed half inclined to risk the anger of his cousin, and try the effect of his second pistol; but other noises were heard in the wood and he desisted.

CHAPTER X.

THE OMEN OF DISASTER.

THE same evening that Cæsar had so distinguished himself in the defense of the young heiress of the Cedars, the people of that little colony were toiling late in the fields. The grain was ripe, the weather was fine, and Mr. Linwood was anxious that every ear should be garnered in good condition. All persons on the property shared the worthy farmer's wish, and none had been absent that day from a rather arduous task but Mrs. Linwood and the truant Agatha, who had gone on some of her favorite explorations. The moon had been some time shining in the heavens, when the harvest people returned. Labor had not banished their merriment, for men and women joined tunelessly in song as they approached the house to refresh themselves with supper.

As their voices for an instant ceased, the rapid progress of a horse was heard. It could not be seen for the intervening wood.

"Miss Agatha," was simultaneously said by several, and no one doubted but that it was her; but when the horse appeared in view, it was plain that he was without a rider. It was Agatha's horse, but the saddle was unoccupied. The animal traveled at a speed scarce ever known before. The empty stirrup dashed against his side as if to urge him forward. His eyes were glazed with terror. His body was white with foam. The joyous song of the harvesters was hushed, as they regarded his tragic messenger.

The animal advanced toward the gateway. The gate was closed. From its height it was thought an effectual barrier to his further progress; but, the frenzied animal went fearlessly to the leap, and without an apparent effort, cleared the gate, and rushed with undiminished speed toward the house. Here he was seen by Mr. Linwood and his nephew, by whose side he paused and almost fell from agitation and exhaustion. The former thought it was but some mirthful prank of Agatha, who had sent her steed thus riderless up the hill; but,

Jasper looked closer to his distressful condition—his bleeding nose and foaming mouth, his almost maddened eye, and then exclaimed :

“Uncle, there is danger to Agatha. I see it in this horse.”

“It is so, Jasper,” cried the affrighted father ; “what can it be ? Oh, that this animal could speak !”

“Saddle my horse, Jake, and bring him out,” exclaimed Jasper to a man, who rushed into the stable ; then he continued. “He does speak, uncle. Look at these glaring eyes, the foam upon his back, and that empty saddle. Something terrible has happened to cause all this. If mortal man can recover Agatha, I’ll do it.”

“Go, with my blessing, my gallant boy,” said Mr. Linwood, “and I promise with my whole heart—” he paused.

“Let me not be guilty of the crime of ancient Jephtha, and sacrifice my daughter to my rashness, because I know that she would redeem her father’s promise with her life.”

Then he tottered to the stable, where, seeing the men assembled in anxious conversation, he exclaimed ;

“Boys, there are horses for us all. Let us mount and away. Jasper is already far before us. Let us leave not a foot of prairie-ground unsearched, until Agatha be found. I know your devotion—I know your diligence. But now I ask you to increase your tribute a hundred fold. The man who rescues her, may ask of me what he pleases, and it shall be granted.”

The men quickly mounted. Soon every horse save the jaded steed of Agatha was dashing down the hill, led by the old man.

Mrs. Linwood learned the sad tidings from the women. The first thing she saw on recovering from her more acute agony, was her husband leading the men toward the prairie. This example aroused her from inaction. She dispersed her tears, and turning to the wailing women who stood around her, she said :

“See, yonder rides my husband to seek for Agatha ; the men all follow him. Let us profit by such guidance, and not remain in unworthy idleness.”

All readily consented, and in a few minutes the Cedars was abandoned. The alarming fear of Agatha in danger had drawn every inmate from that usually busy hive.

Mr. Linwood, notwithstanding his deep anguish, exercised the adroitness of a practiced tactician in distributing his men, for he was well aware that no danger was likely to threaten his daughter on that secluded prairie that required them in a moment. He thus dispatched them in all directions, so that when he had reached the wood where Agatha still remained, he had only two followers. He had unconsciously pursued the course of Jasper, and had reached the place of combat just in time to prevent his envenomed nephew from again attempting the life of the hero of the field.

"Ah, Jasper here?" said Mr. Linwood, as he rode up and at first saw no one else; then, espying his daughter, he added: "and Agatha, oh, my God!" and leaping from his horse he folded her in his arms, passing over the dead bodies of the wolves without a thought of what they were.

"Oh, Agatha," he exclaimed, "it is said that we know not the value of what we had until we have it not; until this day I knew not your worth to me. I have found more than I dared hope, in finding you." Then, turning toward his nephew, though still supporting his daughter, he continued: "Oh, Jasper, noble Jasper, you are a brave and valiant boy. Who is that scoundrel whom you so sedulously guard? Seize him, my men! and bind and bind him too safely for escape."

The men advanced to seize the black; but to this most flagrant violence Leo dissented with a growl which made the men recede, as they measured with their eyes his fearful strength.

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Linwood, as he perceived what had occurred, "are we to be defeated by a dog? Shoot the dog, my men, and then seize his black accomplice."

Cæsar stepped in front of the hound, his eyes flashing with inward fire. His act so enraged Mr. Linwood that he was preparing to issue less scrupulous orders, when Agatha exclaimed:

"Oh, father, you are so much mistaken. We shall perpetrate a crime instead of reward a hero. That noble man and dog are those to whom your daughter owe her life. I was in the very jaws of those wolves you see lying at his feet. He saw my danger, rushed to my aid, and he and that fearless

hound you have ordered to be shot saved me. Look how they suffer and bleed even yet ! Oh, father, pity him and bless him—the noble man !”

“Is it thus that I have repaid his daring ?” said Mr. Linwood. “Let us ask pardon of him, Agatha. Let us make all the atonement in our power.”

They approached the negro and the hound, which Cæsar still sheltered with his body.

“Your pardon,” said Mr. Linwood, “your pardon, worthy friend, for we have unconsciously done you a wrong which we are anxious to repair. I would have seized you as a felon at a moment when you were entitled to the best feelings of my heart. The life you have preserved has given happiness to a household. We owe all to you. Accept my thanks, my gratitude !”

Cæsar gave his hand to that proffered by Mr. Linwood, as an evidence of his satisfaction ; but when Agatha extended her fair hand with the same intention, he hesitated. The strong and fearless man was now weak and timid before the fair Agatha. He took her hand. A thrill passed through his nerves at that gentle touch. He had never pressed such a hand.

“My worthy friend,” said Agatha, “I am too weak—too much alarmed and agitated to speak one half the gratitude I feel. You have purchased my life with wounds and sufferings. But for you I should have perished in this wood, and the agonies of those I should have left would have been greater than my own. By your courage, you have averted this desolation. I must be permitted to make you prisoner to my gratitude. You must return with us to the Cedars, that you may witness not only our regard, but behold the happiness you have conferred on my dear parents, by your act.”

“Ah, you must come with us,” said Mr. Linwood, “you and that majestic dog. I have much to say as well as my dear daughter. Before I left my house in search of Agatha, I promised my men that he who delivered her from danger might ask of me what boon he pleased, and that I would grant his wish even to the end of my means, and I now repeat that it is only for you to ask and I will give.”

Cæsar was amazed. ~~The transition from extreme harshness~~

to munificent kindness, had been so sudden that his reason was bewildered. But the sweet words of Agatha, as she thanked him for her life, he could not resist; he felt that he must follow where she guided.

During these events Jasper had not quitted the saddle. From the moment that Agatha had recognized Cæsar as the hero of the fight, he had studied the slave with the utmost attention. As he gazed alternately upon the dog and man, a sudden but marked hate disfigured his features. Every mark of kindness bestowed upon the black was a shock to his maddened sensibilities; and when he heard his uncle remark to Cæsar that he was in readiness to grant him any boon he asked, he pressed close to the slave, and, in a savage tone, demanded:

"What is your name?"

The slave hesitated a moment, and then replied, firmly and fearlessly:

"Cæsar!"

"And that of your hound?" asked Jasper.

"Leo," said the slave, his tone still more decided.

"By all the powers of earth I have him. He's the fellow," said Jasper, exultingly, but too low for other ears. Then he again asked:

"What business have you here upon the prairies? 'Tis no place for your color."

Agatha looked reproachfully at her cousin, as he roughly put these interrogatives, though she was too much agitated to speak; but, the expression was not unseen by Mr. Linwood, who, though always patient with his nephew, felt much indignation at this usage of a man who had risked his own to save his cousin's life.

"To ask our friend his name and that of his noble dog," said Mr. Linwood, "is a duty I ought not to have forgotten; but, to demand what right he has on these free plains is to arrogate more than is becoming. What right have we but that of settlement to all that we possess? Surely we who hold lands upon such a title ought not to impugn the right of another. Friend Cæsar, you will excuse my nephew, as the night is one of great excitement. Let us move forward to the *Codere*."

"My own cabin is not far away," stammered Cæsar, pointing toward the west.

"What, far in the west?" queried Mr. Linwood.

"No, here, not half a mile away," said Cæsar.

"What, on this prairie?" asked Mr. Linwood.

"Yes," replied Cæsar.

"Well, I thought I knew my neighbors within fifty miles," said Mr. Linwood, "but it seems that I did not. Well, come with us, Cæsar, for we must form a friendship that shall last with life. My last feeling as I cease to breathe will be gratitude to you."

"Cæsar, you will not refuse me," said Agatha. "It will afford me happiness, and courage too, to see you and Leo beside me as we travel home."

"Lady, I shall go with you," replied Cæsar, much and visibly affected.

Agatha pressed his hand in gratitude, and so did her father. More conversation ensued as they moved slowly home. It was seen that Cæsar was a stranger to the Linwood estate, although he knew Sachem, Fleetfoot and other notables of the Indian tribe. Even the lynx-eyed Jasper had not spied the cabin. If he beheld its smoke in the distance, the Indians were supposed to be there.

As they neared the Cedars, a cheer of exultation was uttered by the men, which was understood at home, and a responding cry, intermixed with the wild and joyous screams of the women, echoed across the plain. All rushed to meet the successful party. Mrs. Linwood caught Agatha in her arms. In a few words all was explained. The slave never received such attention. His wounds were dressed, supper was eaten, and the despair which had reigned at the Cedars was now converted into joy. Cæsar, for the moment, forgot that he was black.

CHAPTER XI

THE ACCOMPLISHED STRANGER.

Nothing could exceed the gratitude of the Linwoods--father, mother and daughter--to Cæsar. They pressed him to defer his departure from day to day. In vain Mr. Linwood urged him to accept cows, oxen, horses, sheep and other property of his ample substance, and, to enforce his prayers in special reference to cows, would call Cæsar's attention to the relish with which Leo lapped new milk. But Cæsar rejected all, for, besides that he had no ambition for possessions beyond his hound and freedom, he had, even in his abject and fallen state, a princely pride which made him disdain any richer privilege than friendship for the service he had rendered.

Agatha said nothing to Cæsar of such recompense as occurred to the commercial feelings of her father, and which is too commonly welcomed by the cupidity of man. She rarely alluded to the valor he had shown in her behalf, because she perceived that it gave him pain; but she treated him with that true gentleness, which, to the poor slave, was a reward richer than a kingdom. The maiden seemed to him more of heaven than of earth.

"Cæsar," said Agatha, one evening, "would you not like to return to your native country?"

"I love the prairies, lady," replied Cæsar.

"More than your own country, Cæsar?" asked Agatha.

"I like to live here," was the equivocal reply, for he would not say that he esteemed the land where he had been a bondman to that where he was born a prince.

"I am very glad, Cæsar," said Agatha, "that you are content to remain in a land whose sons have done you such injustice; for, although I have proposed this question, and would have submitted to your departure, it would have been painful to see you go."

Cæsar wept. So much kindness overflowed the fountains of his soul, and, to hide the great tears welling up in his eyes, he quitted the room, and no more was seen of him that day.

With every act of kindness bestowed upon Cæsar, Jasper Linwood became more enraged. Agatha cared more for the slave than for him. By the poison of his tongue, he had withdrawn the Indians from the Cedars, that they might not share the smiles of Agatha; and, to steel the uncle's heart against them, had instilled into the old man's mind an apprehension that they were preparing to rise against him. Thus he kept these good friends apart, and affected to play the spy and friend to both. Such hateful shapes did his jealousy put on. To this perfidy he had added a crime of greater magnitude. He occasionally traveled to some populous portions of the country, on the business of his uncle, and often returned with books and newspapers for the family amusement. Among one of these collections was a Southern paper, with a long statement of the escape of Cæsar, who was minutely described, as also was the hound. This paper he had preserved, for the graphic and stirring narrative diverted him. When poor Cæsar answered Jasper's two questions, on the night of the combat, he unwittingly betrayed his identity. From that hour Jasper resolved to denounce him to his owners, and secure his return to the South.

Some time had passed since these occurrences. Cæsar and Leo, much against the wishes of all the Linwoods, had resumed the occupancy of his cabin, but was on one of his frequent visits to the Cedars when a terrific tempest swept across the prairies. The whole family were in a state of great alarm. It was evening, just before sunset, and the black clouds sailed with such menacing aspect, that Agatha retired from the window. Already three of the ancient cedars had been rived by the lightning within their view, and the waters of the swollen river on the plain rushed on with a fury that had never been seen, while the dread voice of the thunder awed both animal and man. Suddenly, from the side of a group of trees beyond the stream, a horseman made his appearance. He was moving slowly, but not without concern, for he anxiously surveyed the surrounding country, as if in search of some refuge from the terrors of the night. At length he espied the Cedars from amid the trees. Toward the hill he directed his horse's head, as he increased his pace.

"Jasper," said Mr. Linwood, in some agitation, "that

horseman is making for the bridge. Is it strong enough to withstand the furious current?"

"I'm afraid not, uncle," replied the nephew, without displaying any interest; "'twas not built for such a storm as this."

"We can not stop him," continued Mr. Linwood, with great excitement. "May God preserve him as he did Agatha from the wolves through our worthy Cæsar."

Agatha rushed to the window at this expression, and, as she saw the horseman's slow approach, for the wind and torrents of rain obstructed him, she exclaimed:

"Oh, is there no way to warn him that he must not attempt the bridge?"

The sentence was scarcely uttered, when Cæsar was rushing down the hill with Leo at his heels. The stranger had reached the bridge, and was examining its strength with some distrust; but as he perceived no other ford, he seemed determined to tempt its strength. He advanced; but when he had reached the center, a scream from Agatha announced that the bridge had failed, and that the horse and rider were struggling in the stream. Neither could be seen above the waters; but though the distance was too great, and the night too far advanced, to distinguish small objects, it did not follow that they were wholly lost. Mr. Linwood ended the awful silence which prevailed:

"Jasper," he said, "your eyes are younger. Is there not something attempting to climb the bank? Ah, it is the horse. The animal is saved, and there is yet hope for his master."

"See—see, dear father," exclaimed Agatha, "lower down the river. *Leo is dragging something from the water!* It must be the horseman—he is saved! Oh, noble animal!"

It had now become so dark, that, but for the lightning which illumined the plain, nothing could have been seen; but by the almost unremitting flashes of this agent, it was perceived that Leo had assisted the horseman to the river's bank, up which he clambered, though apparently in a greatly exhausted state. Resting a moment, he caressed the dog, and then approached his horse, which was lingering on the bank. Cæsar, through torrents of rain, with the thunder rumbling in his head, and the lightning flashing in his face,

still hurried toward the stream ; but he sent Leo forward, and his superior speed enabled him so to assist the traveler that he was saved. By the time the stranger had joined his horse, Cæsar had reached the river's edge, and, after some consultation, he was seen guiding him toward the Cedars. Mr. Linwood was at the door to meet them.

"Silence, sir," said he to the stranger. "I have witnessed your danger and your deliverance. A warm bath is prepared. My wardrobe—that of a rude farmer—is at your service, and when your toilet is completed, I will cheerfully hear all you have to say."

The stranger bowed and smiled at this unique reception, but he was not the less grateful at its hospitable warmth.

Soon the stranger reëntered. He was somewhat grotesquely dressed. He and the worthy donor of his attire were incompatible in figure. Mr. Linwood was his inferior in height, but by far his superior in breadth ; and the garments, which so well suited the good farmer, were much too ample for the less obese stranger. The coat was disposed in wide folds of drapery behind ; the vest hung loosely and idly from the shoulders, having comparatively so little to inclose ; the pantaloons, besides the oddity of their fashion, paused halfway down the leg, which was covered by a gouty stocking, and the foot by a heavy shoe. All smiled as they surveyed him. He was disposed to enjoy their pleasantry, and said, addressing Mr. Linwood :

"Sir, your interdiction on my speech is ended, and I must introduce myself. My name is Eustace Godlove, by no means a rare soubriquet of the "commonwealth" of England, I am told, a time at which men perpetrated odd pranks in nomenclature. I am a native of Philadelphia. I, with others, have been hunting further west, where buffalo are plentiful. We separated, each to take a different route to the East. And I almost think," he continued, surveying himself in an opposite mirror, "that the most ludicrous illustration in the chronicle of my adventures, will be the guest in the host's attire."

A hearty and prolonged laugh followed, which was not a little provoked by the odd manner of the speaker. But Mr. Linwood, partly in his love of humor, and partly in revenge for this lively sally on the ~~fashion of his vestments~~, observed :

"I see, my good sir, how you may escape the present ridicule. Defer the publication of your travels until you reach my age, and then, in all probability, your proportions will no longer be incompetent to the dress."

The stranger looked ruefully at the roomy clothes, and evidently did not relish the wit of their sportive owner. But these things were soon forgotten in his amusing conversation. He spoke of the foreign lands to which he had traveled, of the wonders, and magnificence, and poverty which he had seen, and said that no country in the world had the elements of happiness, of freedom and of wealth in so marked a degree as that of which they were all natives.

Thus the night which had commenced with such terrible forebodings closed with this scene of happiness. A deep impression of pleasure was made on all by the gayety, wit and knowledge of Eustace Godlove, and he amused his hospitable audience till a late hour, and even then the party separated with regret.

CHAPTER XII.

FROM THE WIGWAM TO THE CEDARS.

THE morning after the night of these exciting incidents, Eustace Godlove appeared at the breakfast-table clad in his own proportionate attire. Care had been taken in their restoration, and they were as smooth and glossy, and free from mud, as if they never had been swept down the fearful stream. His handsome person was now displayed to advantage, and he felt more at ease than in that incongruous drapery so charitably afforded by Mr. Linwood. He reviewed the disasters of the previous night, alluded feelingly to the disinterested kindness of Cæsar, and in admiration to the sagacity of the hound, without whose assistance, he said, so fierce was the torrent that he could not have regained the bank.

"But it is to you, Miss Linwood, to whom I am chiefly indebted. Cæsar tells me it was you who incited him to hasten to my assistance. I owe you my life. It is an obligation of fearful magnitude, and I know not how I can repay it to my satisfaction."

"Cæsar is one of the most generous and bravest of men. My part in your preservation is very insignificant even as represented by yourself. When I perceived the bridge yield, and you and your horse cast into the torrent, then I asked if no one would help the sufferers. Cæsar, the next instant, was on his way to the river."

"Who would not have done the same at such command, inspired by the magic of those eyes?" said Eustace, in a tone so low that it was unheard.

"However," continued Agatha, playfully, "I personally acquit you of all debt."

"I most deeply deplore the heartless kindness of your mercy," replied Eustace, in the most emphatic manner.

Agatha blushed deeply at the equivocal response. She wished to make some gay reply, but the piercing eyes of Eustace were upon her; her courage and her wit were defeated in a moment. But Agatha surmounted this feeling, and broke the painful silence that ensued, by saying:

"It was Leo, at the instance of the good Cæsar, that saved you from the river. I know what it is to owe such a lasting debt, and I will not permit that you affect to owe it me without just cause."

"Have you been in such danger, Miss Linwood?" asked Eustace, with evident interest.

"Yes, sir; and the brave Cæsar and his dog were my saviors."

"Ah! do tell me all."

"It was in the woods. I was followed by two wolves, dragged from my horse, and when there seemed scarcely a thin veil between me and death, Cæsar and his friend appeared. Each selecting an antagonist, fought until I was safe and the assailants slain. We were strangers until that eventful hour; but since that we have daily welcomed him. He is a noble-minded, unselfish and true man."

"I almost wish that I were Cæsar," exclaimed Eustace "that I had killed the treacherous wolf, because the payment he has received would have given me happiness for life."

"Ah," replied Agatha, smiling, "you city gentlemen are prone to flattery, especially when your listeners are rude, unsophisticated, and isolated settlers."

"Indeed, Miss Linwood, you wrong me," said Eustace with emotion. "You think me false when I utter naught but the feelings of my heart."

The blushes mounted upon the cheeks of Agatha, as her father entered the apartment, and relieved her from any response, although it did not lessen her confusion.

"My worthy sir," said Mr. Linwood, "I thought you expressed a desire to see your horse, and promised to follow me to the stable, where I have been awaiting you full half an hour."

"I ask pardon, sir," replied Eustace, "but I take little heed of time, when in the presence of a lady. I have been listening to Miss Linwood's thrilling account of her escape from the wolves, by the bravery of Cæsar and Leo."

"Ah, indeed," said Mr. Linwood, "then I pardon you at once. That is a theme of which we are never weary, and I hope that you will not forget to narrate it in your book of travels. But Jasper tells me you are resolved to leave to-day."

"I certainly have made no private communication to Mr. Jasper," said Eustace; "I said my pledge to my companions urged me to hasten on to the East; but that it was difficult to withdraw one's self from a roof so hospitable. These observations were made to the ladies, with probably Mr. Jasper in the room."

"Well, Mr. Godlove," replied Mr. Linwood, "your horse is unfit for travel. He was sprained in the efforts of yesterday, and ought to have rest. If you will go, however, you shall have one of my best animals—his equal in every point. But I want you to remain with us a week, and then I will not, perhaps, refuse your right to leave us."

"A week!" exclaimed the astonished Eustace, as if that space of time were unending.

But, it proved too short a period—not for the recovery of the steed—but for the pursuits of the master. Three other weeks were added to the first, before he deigned to make a reckoning with time. When, at last, he essayed to leave, he found that fetters, far less fragile than those of iron, chained him to the spot. He became daily more delighted with the country. The trees he thought the most magnificent he had seen vegetation the most exuberant, flowers the most fragrant,

and the people the most agreeable, and the queen of this happy constellation was the fair Agatha. She had fairly won his heart, yet the only one who seemed insensible of the conquest was herself.

Thus Eustace remained, and he and Agatha often visited Cæsar at his cabin, enjoyed the fragrance of his garden, the fruits of his successes in the chase, and the society of the happy black and Leo. They also visited the Indian village, and, by the diplomacy of Eustace, extracted from the Sachem the cause of his absenting himself from the Cedars, whereupon Mr. Linwood mounted his horse, and riding straightway to the wigwam of the chief, unburdened his bosom to the Sachem, to the shame of Jasper. The friendship of the two worthy chiefs was thus restored, as the perfidy of the nephew was unmasked ; but no other reproof than the renewal of their attachment to each other was administered to the wicked intriguer.

Eustace in vain appointed days to leave the Cedars. He could not separate from the magnet of his life. That heart which had been unaffected by the beauties of the city succumbed to the artless charms of a fair occupant of the wild prairies. His days were passed in attendance on Agatha. To him it was the chief joy of life, but at night, when he retired to the reflections of the pillow, and the clouds of thought were not dispersed by the brightness of her countenance nor the melody of her voice, he found that his happiness was incomplete. Absence afforded no delight to his meditations, for he feared that he was not truly beloved by Agatha. With daily opportunities he dared not to propound the question of questions. He dared not anticipate the horrors of rejection, and if he avoided this crisis in affairs, he might still enjoy her society, her smiles, and even bask in a goodly portion of her favor. He had almost resolved to pass more of these bitter nights to purchase such brilliant days, when, one evening, as they were riding from Cæsar's cabin to the Cedars, Agatha remarked :

"I thought there was less cheerfulness in Cæsar's manner when we quitted his cabin. There was a sadness in his face that approached to agony, and our noble Leo seemed to share his master's gloom.

"Yes, poor Cæsar is troubled about something," said Eustace. "What are his griefs we can only guess, for he is so reticent that it is impossible to read his troubles." The escort here heaved a sigh, so deeply drawn as to attract the lady's notice. He added: "*I should esteem my griefs small if shared by the lovely Miss Linwood.*"

"You will never cease to flatter," replied Agatha, playfully.

"Nay, Miss Linwood," responded Eustace, "flattery is false; but I speak from the heart." It was said in a tone at once so sad and earnest as to affect Agatha's nerves visibly. She answered not a word; and Eustace, bursting all bonds of restraint, leaned over, looked eagerly in her face, and said: "I love you—*love* you, dear Agatha!"

Her head was instantly cast down. Tears trickled down her cheeks, now alternately pale and crimsoned. The gentleman murmured his passion in other burning words, but they were unheeded. She gazed straight forward upon vacancy. The pallor deepened upon her face. She at length replied, in a tone which was not more sad than tender:

"Eustace, I must hasten home. I am ill."

Eustace! Not Mr. Godlove, but *Eustace!* It was enough.

That night, as he was sitting alone out on the porch, the timid step at his side was but the herald of a whisper in his ear, "Eustace, I love you!" He sprung to his feet, but the fairy form had glided away as if it was but a shadow. He was quite bewildered, when old Mr. Linwood came forward. "Mr. Godlove, a serious word with you," was the salutation. Ah! how his strength went from him. He stepped into the room to find only Mrs. Linwood present. Both old people were very earnest, but kind. With his direct, forcible manner, Mr. Linwood made him aware of his knowledge of what had transpired, and requested of him a full exposition of his wishes, his abilities to care for a wife, and finally, the proofs he could submit of his good standing and good family. Godlove was relieved in a moment. His full heart unburdened itself, and, when the interview was ended, he retired to his room the accepted suitor for Agatha's favor.

"Eustace, I love you!" rung through his dreams all that night.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ADVENT OF A REAL TERROR.

A TRAMP of horsemen was heard late the next day. Looking down the hill, several persons were observed heading toward the mansion. Soon they were at the gate, where Mr Linwood joined them at once.

"Pardon me, sir," said the foremost of the party, a portly gentleman, mounted upon a horse of great strength, "but we are travelers, and as houses are of rare occurrence in this region, now that we have found one of sufficient magnitude to afford entertainment for man and horse—that is six of each—we ask your hospitality."

"Sir, it is usual with us to give the word of 'welcome' before the traveler asks," replied Mr. Linwood.

"By Jove," exclaimed the first speaker, "such hospitality warms the heart of man. I never welcomed my oldest friend with more grace to the Tourville mansion. What think you, Beaumont?"

"That the heart of our host is as large as the prairie on which he dwells," said the gentleman appealed to.

The third gentleman was introduced as Mr. Flesher.

At table Beaumont sat next to Agatha, and Eustace was on the other side of her. Agatha, that she might not be thought discourteous to a stranger, entertained him in her most agreeable manner.

"Then your object is not pleasure?" said Agatha, in reference to Beaumont's observations.

"No, no," said Beaumont, smiling, "there is little of that on these houseless plains. We came in search of something we have lost."

"Indeed," said Agatha, in surprise. "You must seek something of infinite value to attract six persons from so great a distance. You have said enough to excite more than a lady's curiosity."

"I fear you are challenging me to speak less enigmatically," replied Beaumont, cheerfully: "but, I am cautioned to

maintain secrecy by that dark little man with knitted brows, who sits beside my father, and who is listening to the conversation of our noble parents, which he fain would bring to conclusion, if he dared."

"The gentleman who was introduced as Mr. Fleisher?" asked Agatha.

"Yes," replied Beaumont; "he is the projector of this enterprise. He has secret intelligence that something is hidden hereabouts that he has a desire to find."

"He must be a naturalist, and seeks some rare animal?" suggested Agatha, with a smile.

"No," replied Beaumont, "he is *unnatural*; he seeks a man."

"A man!" exclaimed Agatha, incredulously. "A criminal?"

"Not precisely criminal," said Beaumont, "except in being too much devoted to freedom for one who purchased his services during life for two thousand dollars."

"You refer to a slave?" said Agatha, interrogatively.

"Who escaped from our plantation, taking with him a hound that my father thinks unequalled in the world," said Beaumont.

"Had the slave any name?" asked Agatha, in great agitation.

"He was called Cæsar with us," replied Beaumont.

"And the hound?" gasped Agatha.

"We named Leo. Miss Linwood, you are ill. Permit me to offer water," exclaimed Beaumont, in alarm.

Agatha was on the point of fainting. The danger of poor Cæsar struck her to the heart; but vigor was required. She determined to use the confidence she had so innocently extorted, and, with a face of appalling pallor, she arose from her seat, and said to Beaumont:

"You must excuse me for a short period. I am subject to these sudden oppressions, and feel it necessary to retire."

"I trust, Miss Linwood," said Beaumont, rising and opening the door, "that you will soon recover and return, for the happiness of the evening is departing with you."

Eustace and her mother were greatly alarmed, but she implored them to remain.

Agatha passed immediately into the open air. Near the

house, perceiving the loitering Jake, she beckoned him, and said :

"Saddle my horse as secretly as you can, and lead it to the gate, where I will join you."

"Oh, Miss Agatha, don't go," he cried. "'Tis too late to ride. The wolves are on the prairie."

"I care not for the wolves," said Agatha. "I have that to do which nothing shall prevent. I would ride through a pack of those ferocious monsters rather than turn a yard from the straight course. Do my bidding, Jake."

Both were soon at the gate. As Agatha mounted, she said :

"Now, Matchless, you must fly. There is life in your errand, and such a life as I would sacrifice my own to shelter."

Matchless bounded forward, and, in another minute, the echo of his footsteps had died away. But those of another horse were heard.

"Ah," said Jake, "that's the heavy foot of Jasper's horse. He's arter Miss Agatha—for the matter o' that he alus ha' bin—but he stands no more chance of overtakin' her than he ha' done all along."

This astute horsekeeper was correct. It was the horse of Jasper whose clatter he had recognized. That fierce conspirator had overheard Agatha's directions for her horse, and hastened to the stable for his own, and firmly resolved to abduct his cousin as she crossed the silent plain. But the horse of Jasper was unequal to the pace of Matchless. Agatha rode as boldly as himself that night. She had the courage of the lion in her heart, and dashed through wood and copse and over the plain toward Cæsar's cabin with the fearlessness of desperation.

Cæsar had remained within all day. A foreboding of approaching ill, which sometimes occupies the mind, had seized on his, and no effort of his generally vigorous feelings could dispel it. The shadows of night brought no alleviation of this depression ; but when utter darkness had hidden even the whiteness of Leo's silky coat, there was a rush along the prairie, a bound, as if the garden fence was leaped, and then an assault upon the sturdy door. Neither slave nor hound, despite their long repose from danger, were the less prepared to meet it. Cæsar jumped from his couch, forgot his

premonition, and prepared for action; but a sweet voice, in rapid speech, cried:

"Cæsar—Cæsar, uncloze the door."

The order was obeyed, to disclose the fleet Matchless, covered with foam, with Agatha on his back.

"Miss Agatha," the affrighted negro cried, "alone, cross de prairie dis dark night. Is dere danger at de Cedars?"

"Yes, Cæsar, there is danger," said Agatha, "and I need .. you. Know you the Tourvilles or one Flesher?"

Cæsar was astounded at this question. Their names had never passed his lips, and he shuddered at their mention.

"Dreadful!" she continued, as she perceived the agitated state of Cæsar. "They are now at the Cedars—father, son, and this repulsive Flesher, and three attendants, all well mounted and well armed—too powerful to resist, and, perhaps, too cruel to appease. You must fly, Cæsar. In your absence we can the better purchase your freedom; for when my dear father knows of this he will give his whole substance for your ransom."

Tears ran down the cheeks of the poor slave as he listened to Agatha, and when she paused he fell upon his knees before the panting steed. He was completely unmanned.

"Come with me now, Cæsar, not an instant must be lost. My absence may be observed, and when, in the morning, they find that you have fled, they may suspect its object. Be my escort, Cæsar—you and brave Leo."

These four travelers were soon again upon the plain—Agatha and Matchless, Cæsar and the hound. Before they reached the Cedars, the two latter pursued their course to the eyrie through the trees, while Agatha rode to the gate.

"Glad you're back safe, Miss Agatha," said the waiting Jake, with pleasure; then added: "Did you see Jasper?"

"No," replied Agatha.

"He followed ye," said Jake; "'twas too dark to see him, but I know'd his horse's pace."

Agatha was astonished; but she could not believe that any solicitude of Jasper would induce him to follow her for her advantage. The villain, however, was even then not far off. Like the wolves that Cæsar slew, he had been thwarted of his prey; but he had stealthily watched the travelers as they

approached the Cedars, and, as he feared the hound and dared not follow Cæsar, he fastened his horse to a tree, and kept a closely behind Agatha as possible. He saw her deliver her horse to Jake; he followed her up the hill, even to the cyrie then, when Cæsar and Leo appeared, all was plain to him. He had outwitted the cunning of his cousin; he knew the hiding-place of his victim, and he could afford to defer a day or two the culmination of his schemes.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SEIZURE.

THE planter had, with great candor, related to his host the object of his visit to the prairies. Mr. Linwood with feelings more generous than subtle, also confessed his knowledge of Cæsar, and his regard for him.

"Sir," said Mr. Linwood, "I owe him half my riches, so that he can purchase his own freedom. I am his banker, and will honor his check, even beyond what I have mentioned. I know his value, and am not niggardly in my views. What say you, Mr. Tourville?"

"Well, sir," replied the planter, "he cost me two thousand dollars; but, his condition is, no doubt, improved by this long period of leisure, and, of course, that has been loss to me. But Flesher will arrange these little matters."

The inveterate Flesher sat, like a censor, beside the planter, as if to warn him against responding to the generous sentiments of the guileless settler. The departure of Agatha made the evening tedious to Beaumont, and the visitor generally seemed glad to conform to the early hours of retirement usual at the Cedars, and they soon separated.

With the light of the sun's earliest rays, Flesher was in the saddle—he and his three men, for he could control no others. He procured a guide, and marched for Cæsar's cabin. He summoned the runaway to come forth. The appeal was unanswered, and the rage of Flesher increased. He directed the door to be forced, but it was found unfastened; the occupant was gone! Then he gave vent to the ferocity of

his nature. He charged his men with treachery, the guide with having delayed them on the road, and condemned the folly of the elder Tourville. When his oaths and his invective were exhausted, he fired the cabin, tore up the fences to increase the flames, and then rode over the garden and the fields, that the land might partake of the ruin of the house. When this work of destruction was completed, still feeding his savage mind with plans of vengeance, he returned to the Cedars.

"Where's Jasper—where is Jasper Linwood?" he vociferated, as he reached the house.

"Jasper!" exclaimed Mr. Linwood, who appeared at the door. "What know you of Jasper Linwood?"

"He wrote to me, saying the runaway negro, Cæsar, was here," replied the maddened Flesher. "I have the letter here; 'tis signed Jasper Linwood. I charge you with felony, with conspiracy and with slave-harboring."

"Intemperate man," interposed Mr. Linwood, "your wrath has betrayed another atrocious act of my worthless nephew, whom I have not seen since your arrival. But I must warn you that such violence as that of which you are now guilty will not be tolerated here. We are willing to do the hospitalities of the prairies, but when our visitors lose all sense of decent conduct, we have our remedy, and shall use it."

It was soon known that Cæsar had escaped. Mr. Tourville looked grave, and sent for Flesher; but he had again left the house. Mr. Linwood, assuring his guest that he was wholly ignorant of Cæsar's escape until disclosed to him by Flesher, renewed his offers to purchase the freedom of the slave upon any terms proposed. Mr. Tourville, however, declined to sell what was not and might never be in his possession. Thus the day passed heavily to all. There was a want of confidence between visitors and host, at least between the elder Tourville and the family.

Preguant with indignation at the threat of Mr. Linwood, Flesher walked rapidly through the wood, to subdue his anger; but when the undergrowth had become so dense as to impede his progress, he suddenly perceived a man smiling at his difficulties. He thought this idler might be useful, and he addressed him saying:

"You know the woods, I guess?"

"I guess I ought," replied the man. "I was here before the Cedars was called the Cedars, and before the house was built."

"Pray, what may be your name?" asked Flesher.

"'Tis well known hereabouts. 'Tis Jasper Linwood."

"Jasper Linwood!" echoed Flesher, with the greatest joy. "My name is Flesher."

"I know 'tis," replied the imperturbable Jasper. "I read the nigger-driver in your face the night you reached the Cedars."

"Do you know that the slave has escaped?" inquired Flesher, disregarding the observation of Jasper.

"He's escaped *you*, but I've caged him," replied Jasper.

"Is he safe?" exclaimed Flesher, his eyes flashing with fire, as he grasped the arm of Jasper. "Let me see him! Only let me see him!" He grasped his heavy whip, while a savage light lit up his eyes. "I'll feast to-day on nigger's blood."

"We are of a kin," exclaimed Jasper. "I, like you, have a distemper in my mind, and find that the only medicine that will touch it is blood. Thus, you and I will drink of this beverage together."

When darkness, that light to villainy, covered the earth. Flesher and Jasper stealthily ascended to the eyrie. They opened the door as softly as if it were the effect of some gentler hand, and entered this retreat of Agatha. Jasper, having already explored the place, removed a plank, which led into the opening below. The hound leaped out. In an instant he was muzzled and secured. Then slowly, as if in sorrow, appeared Cæsar. He was seized and gagged. His arms were tightly bound, and only his legs left unshackled, that he might walk. In a few minutes the party were proceeding down the hill. Horses were in readiness, and Jasper and Flesher, their captive and the hound, set forward at rapid rate.

CHAPTER XV

THE BID FOR LIBERTY.

THE next morning, after breakfast, a note from Flesher informed Mr. Tourville that he had recaptured the runaway, and that, fearing a rescue, he had removed the slave at night, and should wait at the nearest settlement for the planter. That gentleman proceeded to the parlor, where the family were assembled, and made known the purport of this dispatch. They were appalled at the intelligence; but when the first effects of the announcement were dispelled, he said to Mr. Linwood:

"I thank you for the hospitality you have afforded me. As you are well aware my object is attained, I shall prepare to quit your roof and join my agent."

"You can not mean to quit us thus abruptly," said Mr. Linwood. "Is there not a purchase pending between us?"

"Subject to two contingencies," replied the planter—"possession and the approval of Flesher. One has been overcome, and the other, of course, rests upon my departure, for I have not since seen Flesher."

"Let me entreat you to exclude one so worthless and brutal from any participation in our arrangement," replied Mr. Linwood. "I will consent to any terms of purchase within my power. All that you behold—my lands, my buildings, my stock of every kind, and all that I possess in property, I will give to you for the liberty of that poor slave."

"You can not tempt my cupidity," replied the planter. "The slave is conditionally sold to you for two thousand dollars; but I decline to proceed further until I meet Flesher."

At this period of the exciting dialogue Agatha appeared. She was determined to make in person an appeal to the obdurate proprietor of Cæsar, and, as her tall figure advanced toward the planter, Beaumont thought her more beautiful in anguish than in joy.

"Bowed down with agony of heart," Agatha commenced, "I come to implore relief. I ask mercy for Cæsar, for he saved my life when I was very near to death. His escape

from you was an incident in the design that I should receive life at Cæsar's hands, and would you punish him because am living? If there was wrong done you, it was to benefit me, and may I not claim to be responsible to you? Examine the links of this mysterious chain as closely as I have done and regard them as charitably, and you will ascribe the conduct of poor Cæsar to his fate, to work out which it was necessary to plant in his breast some strong passion, such as an irresistible love of liberty. You had once a daughter—the sweet Emile—I have heard of her from your son—it was her fate to die in youth; but as she left these realms for those more glorious, she asked of you the freedom of a gentle and tender girl who nursed her. You promised to fulfill her wish, and you performed your vow. You did not *then* refuse to Flesher. He was not your monitor in *that* case. Why should he be in this? But if that favorite slave of Emile could have restored that sweet girl to life, what would you have given?"

"My whole estate," exclaimed the agitated father; "but I can not endure this. I can not have my heart and feelings thus harrowed. You ask for mercy, but deal mercilessly with me;" and, rushing from the room, and mounting his horse he galloped down the hill, followed by his attendants.

The pleading of poor Agatha was as vain as the generous offers of her father.

"Cæsar must be recovered, my sweet one," exclaimed Mr. Linwood to his daughter. "Give me a few hours for thought, and do you retire the while."

Beaumont Tourville had been a witness to these occurrences. He had seen his father depart, but had not followed him. He roamed among the trees around the house until he perceived Agatha retire to her favorite eyrie. This was as he wished. After some delay, he ascended the hill, and reached the fantastic castle erected upon its summit, opened the door, and directly opposite sat Agatha, upon her cushioned seat, by a window.

"I venture to present myself," he said, "at a place which I know is reserved for more privileged guests; but, my desire to speak with you before my departure will, I trust, mitigate the presumption." Agatha slightly bowed.

"Your heart is pierced with agony," he continued, "at this seizure of Cæsar, whom I have been taught by you to honor, although our slave. I have sufficient influence with my father to procure that poor slave his freedom."

"Oh!" exclaimed Agatha, rising from her seat; "if you can effect that, you will earn our love and gratitude forever."

"I, like my father," smiled Beaumont, "must burden my services with one condition; that granted, I will to horse and to-morrow will return with Cæsar, as free as I am now."

"It is conceded," exclaimed Agatha, with joy; "name it, Beaumont Tourville, for it is granted!"

"Agatha," said Beaumont, "it is your heart and hand."

Agatha fell back upon her seat.

"What am I to dread from that terror in your face," said Beaumont, in great agitation; "are my hopes, so exultant in your willing promise, doomed to denial? Here, upon my knee, which never bent to woman—"

"Rise, sir, I command," said Agatha. "Were it in my power, I would not thus barter away my heart; but, that which you ask is no longer to be bestowed."

"Then I am indeed undone," exclaimed Beaumont. "Indignant beauty, as you reject my terms, I depart at once."

Bowing, he quitted the apartment, and rushed down the hill.

Agatha had not recovered from the pain of this monstrous proposition, when the door again opened, and Eustace entered.

"Dearest Agatha," he said, "did not some one just now pass down the hill?"

"Yes," replied Agatha, "Beaumont Tourville, who was here to propose terms for Cæsar's freedom, which I rejected."

"Enough of him," replied Eustace; "I come to ask your consent that I may follow Cæsar, for I think I can outwit those villains, and restore the poor slave to liberty."

"Go, Eustace, go by all means," exclaimed Agatha, "and I will pray incessantly for your success and safety."

More words of devotion passed between the lovers, and when Eustace had conducted Agatha from the eyrie to the house, they separated, the former to the pursuit of his plans for the recovery of Cæsar, the latter to endure the terrible feeling of suspense.

from you was an incident in the design that I should receive life at Cæsar's hands, and would you punish him because I am living? If there was wrong done you, it was to benefit me, and may I not claim to be responsible to you? Examine the links of this mysterious chain as closely as I have done and regard them as charitably, and you will ascribe the conduct of poor Cæsar to his fate, to work out which it was necessary to plant in his breast some strong passion, such as an irresistible love of liberty. You had once a daughter—the sweet Emile—I have heard of her from your son—it was her fate to die in youth; but as she left these realms for those more glorious, she asked of you the freedom of a gentle and tender girl who nursed her. You promised to fulfill her wish, and you performed your vow. You did not *then* refer to Flesher. He was not your monitor in *that* case. Why should he be in this? But if that favorite slave of Emile could have restored that sweet girl to life, what would you have given?"

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CHAPTER XVI

THE DEVICE OF SAMBO.

FLESHER and Jasper pursued their journey with a good fortune not always denied to villainy, while their wretched prisoner, submissive and uncomplaining, cared not for the fate that was intended him. They had ridden five days with but little intermission. Their horses then were so jaded that they could proceed no further, and they awaited the arrival of the Tourvilles. It was two days before those gentlemen reached the little settlement. Then the elder Tourville upbraided Flesher for having proceeded so far without consulting him. The planter visited Cæsar, desired that he should be instantly relieved of his manacles, and adequately fed, and he was deeply affected when his favorite hound—the idolized Leo—refused to return his caresses."

Matters were in this rather unpropitious state, when a negro, riding into the yard with a led horse by his side, nodded familiarly to Flesher, saying :

"Oh, massa Flesher, how-do—how-do. Long way off' plantation. Is dey 'commodation here?"

Flesher did not recognize his colored friend, and would have resented this familiarity, had he not been in charge of such superior cattle. He condescended, therefore, to ask where he came from, and his name.

"I Sambo," replied the negro, exhibiting his white teeth as he smiled, "o' massa Bajo's plantation. I buyin' horses for him. What you t'ink o' dat, massa Flesher?"

"They're fine horses, Sambo," said Flesher, as he viewed them with admiration. "Is Mr. Bagot here with you?"

"Oh no, replied Sambo, "he nebber come wid me. Massa trust me. I good judge o' hosses," and he surveyed the stately animals as if in admiration of his superior skill.

Then he passed into the stable where the horses belonging to Flesher's party were. He shook his head as if it were not fitted for his dainty animals, and proceeded to some buildings nearer the road. Flesher disapproved of this. He beckoned Sambo back, but the stubborn negro refused

return. He pulled up his horses at the building his eye selected, and, as the owner stood by, he asked if his horses could be stabled there.

"Yes, I s'pose they can," replied the man. "I let part on't to the man you were talkin' to, to cage a runaway in, but, as 'tis divided, you can have the other part. There is three stalls in't, two for the horses and one for yourself; but I must be well paid; these horses must have good beddin' and good feed."

"Massa pay anyt'ing so him hosses com'fable," said Sambo, and the horses were admitted.

Flesher was dissatisfied; but he did not express his anger. On the contrary he and Jasper joined Sambo in the stable; while they loitered the horses were fed, when they learned from the voluble slave that he had three more horses coming in the next day, as fine as those they saw. This intelligence seemed solacing to these men with travel-worn animals, for Flesher went straight to the planter, and induced that personage to visit Sambo.

Mr. Tourville soon appeared, and after considerable difficulty prevailed on Sambo to consent to commit the horses of his master to the planter's charge, upon the condition that no ill consequence should befall the slave. This matter satisfactorily settled, and arrangements made to pursue their journey with these horses in the morning, the planter retired.

While the conversation with Mr. Tourville was proceeding, a stout man, who had been loitering about the yard, before Sambo entered with his horses, joined the party. When he and Sambo were alone, he said:

"Well, Mr. Sambo, you ha' made a pretty use of your master's horses. P'raps when the lash is a fallin' upon *your* back, you'll wish that you'd took better advice."

Sambo winced a little at the allusion to the lash; but not a word could the stranger extract from him.

"Can't you feel for a poor slave like yourself?" said the stranger, appealingly. "Can't you assist a poor brother that these whites want to kill?"

"Who you? What you name?" demanded Sambo.

"My name is Tim Ruggles," said the stranger; "that slave saved me from drowning, at the hazard of bein' detected, and I swore when he was in danger to be near him. His name

is Cæsar. I will save him. I have followed the Tourvilles day and night for this purpose. I will save him if it costs ten lives. Do you apprehend? But, mark, Mr. Sambo; if you lend your horses to them scoundrels and stop behind, as you are alive now, you shall be one of the dead men."

The negro stood in silence a moment, then added, with earnestness: "I guess dat dis nigger is gwine to help Cæsar."

"All right, woolly head! Now my on'y chance o' sp'akin' to the nigger is through this partition, and if you stand by the door, I'll do it at once."

Tim Ruggles knocked upon the boards, until a hollow voice asked what was required. It was that of Cæsar. Tim called him closer, that his voice might not be heard outside. Then he communicated his name and object, and the poor slave's heart soon warmed again with the hope of freedom.

"Remember," said Tim, as he left Cæsar, "to-night at twelve. I'll settle with your guard, and if they should all be on the watch, we'll fire the building. Good-by."

The night came without suspicion. At twelve, Tim Ruggles seized upon the guard—the unhappy Flesher—gagged and bound him, and taking from him the keys of Cæsar's prison, delivered the fugitive from confinement, and cast Flesher upon the slave's wretched pallet. Leo was also released from his bonds by Cæsar's hands, and once more the two friends were free. When they reached the spot where the horses were in readiness, they were attended by a white man instead of by Sambo.

"By Jove, we are betrayed," exclaimed Tim, drawing a pistol. But the person in attendance came forward, and said:

"My worthy friend, be not alarmed. I but assumed the character of Sambo, and, as I have succeeded in deceiving you, Mr. Tourville and the heartless Flesher, I am persuaded that my part was not badly acted; but, we have attained our object. They have no immediate means of following us. Farewell, good Tim. You are a true-hearted man. I hope we shall meet again. The only circumstance of regret to me is that in the character of Sambo I should for a moment have distrusted your honest face." It was Eustace Godlove.

"Wal, if you arn't one of 'em!" and Tim laughed without restraint or fear of being overheard. "Here I've trapped

weeks and weeks after these slave-hunters, only to see Cæsar done for by a better friend than I. But all right, old fellow. I propose to remain up in these parts, and maybe we'll become better acquainted. But say, now, how did *you* know any thing about old Bagot? That I can't understand."

"Well, my friend, I will confess that there is honor and feeling in many a southern heart where it is least suspected. Traveling hither, without any special idea how I was to effect Cæsar's escape, I rode up to a house by the way to find Beaumont Tourville there. He recognized me, and of course divined my purpose in following his father. What had I to expect but violence at his hand. To his honor he confessed his disgust at all the proceedings in Cæsar's case, and himself perfected the scheme by which I obtained entrance to Cæsar's place of confinement. He had, in his saddle-bags, the clothes and wig which I wore—doubtless having designed to use them himself to effect what I offered at once to do. This is all!"

A long conference was held, when it was arranged that Tim should proceed with Cæsar to the Indian village, there to remain until it was ascertained that all danger had passed. Godlove pressed on to the Cedars, to relieve the sorrow of the place by his good news.

The Tourvilles arose the next morning early, to find their slave gone. The elder raved—the younger, who had only arrived the evening previous, said nothing. Flesher was found to be much bruised. Tim had "given him something to remember him by," as he afterward confessed. What should be done? To return to the Cedars was to provoke a scene which none cared to encounter. Besides, it was improbable that the negro would proceed thither. It was fruitless to follow him. Jasper was called into the council. He promised to return to the Cedars to watch and wait for Cæsar, and, if any discovery of his whereabouts was made, to duly inform Flesher, who would proceed to Louisville and there tarry for a month or two to recruit.

Thus the party separated—the Tourvilles to proceed southward and Jasper to find his way stealthily back to the Cedars. Poor Flesher, bruised and battered, as if a house had fallen on him, went to Louisville by a small boat which he hired two stout fellows to pull.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE STORM AND THE CALM.

CÆSAR's heart so longed for his cabin that he persuaded Tim to proceed thither instead of going to the Indian village. This arrangement Godlove would, perhaps, have forbidden; but, as he sped on with the eager pace of the lover, he soon left the two men and Leo to themselves. Tim's knowledge of woodcraft led him to use great caution. Cæsar informed him all about Jasper, and it was their mutual opinion that that now thoroughly unmasked scoundrel would not abandon the Cedars without further visitation. Thinking affairs over in all their lights and shades, they resolved to act warily and to haunt the secret places around, hoping to strike upon his track. If he were found lurking around it is highly probable both men proposed to constitute a vigilance tribunal of last resort.

The Cedars became visible one afternoon in the far distance rising up out of the plain like a "jewel on the Ethiop's breast." Cæsar and Tim, however, bent their steps toward the spot which the slave had called home. How his heart longed to call it home again! Nearer they came. Cæsar failed to behold, rising from the greenness around, the little cabin castle of his refuge. Leo bounded ahead and soon came back shrieking and whining in a singular manner. A pang like a wound pierced Cæsar's breast. He *felt* that his home was no more and dashed out as wildly as the pace of his strong horse would permit. There before his gaze lay the ruins of his place. It was a terrible sight for the wretched fugitive, and unmanned him completely. He gave way to such a burst of grief as caused Tim to turn away his face to hide his own commiserating tears. Who had done that deed? His heart whispered Jasper. It was the last drop in his cup of bitterness, and there he vowed to hunt the author of that ruin to his grave.

Retiring to a thicket of vine and undergrowth near at hand the men prepared for a night's rest. The air was balmy, the foliage heavy, and, to less disturbed souls, a sweet repose would have been vouchsafed. But neither slept. Tim was silen

watchful, anxious; Cæsar was calm, resolute, but yet not patient. His heart throbbed like an anvil beneath heavy strokes, and his veins burned fire. So many wrongs, so much suffering, were enough to have driven a less determined man to insanity.

Ten, eleven, twelve—the hours dragged their slow lengths along. As midnight came the men were aroused by the attitude of the hound. He stood erect—his head elevated as if scenting the air—his eyes glaring wildly into the dimness ahead. His face was turned up the path leading direct to the Cedars. Tim listened. "A clatter of horse's hoofs, Cæsar!" The clatter became momentarily more distinct; soon the form of horse and rider burst into the clear moonlight as they came forward from the woods to bend over the prairie toward the north. Cæsar's hut lay on their track. The rider must pass it. Leo, with the subtle instinct of his race, crouched along the tall grass to the broken fence, up to which the horse soon rushed. A wild howl burst from the hound's throat, and, in an instant, his body shot through the air, like a thunderbolt. The horse reared and fell backward. Cæsar and Tim were at hand to snatch from the fall the form of a woman; Leo had fastened his fangs upon the man's throat. There was a brief struggle, then a moan, and all was still. Dropping the female upon the grass, the two men flew to the prostrate rider to find him dead. Leo stood over the body, evidently unwilling to leave it. Cæsar dragged him away by force. Tim, lifting the head, exclaimed:

"Jasper Linwood!"

At the word, the slave sprung to the still senseless female; examining the face, he found the mouth tightly bound. The worst suspicions were aroused. It was Agatha. It was but the work of a moment to unbind her mouth. Tim procured water from Cæsar's well, and ere long the faithful attendants had the satisfaction of seeing consciousness restored. She opened her eyes, but in the darkness did not recognize the negro.

"Oh, mercy, Jasper, I pray! Mercy for my poor father's and mother's sake!" she plead, piteously.

"Miss Agatha, it is I—it is Cæsar dat has got you!"

"Cæsar!"

She smiled sweetly, and sunk away in a second swoon. A succession of cries, shouts and a rush of horses' feet came

borne on the still air, from the direction of the mansion. It was evident that the alarm had been given. Tim sprang upon his horse, and away he flew over the prairie. His exultant and stentorian notes soon brought to his side the members of the household scattered over the prairie in hopeless, aimless search. Then a shout went up from the little group, which was echoed far and near. "Found!" was its burden; and away, over the plain toward the place of the cabin, the riders flew. Mr. Linwood was first at the spot. There sat Cæsar, holding Agatha in his arms, as if she were a child. She was again conscious, and was murmuring her thanks to her deliverer. Leo still stood, motionless as a basilisk, over the prostrate body, lying out beyond Agatha's sight. The parent springing from the saddle, folded his child to his breast in a long and frenzied embrace.

One after another, the people of the farm gathered; but he was not there—Eustace. It was he who gave the alarm. His ear had heard the tread of hoofs down the road leading from the mansion; and, suspicious of every noise, he had arisen and gone forth stealthily, to find Agatha's window open—a ladder against the porch—the front gate open. Up the ladder he flew, to the porch roof—looked in at the open window to find the room deserted, while everywhere around were marks of violence. Quickly he gave the alarm, and, rushing, half-clad, to the stables, sprang upon Agatha's fleet Matchless, and disappeared in the darkness.

The party soon formed an escort for the rescued daughter—Cæsar upon one side and Mr. Linwood upon another, and thus they returned to the hill, to the speechless joy of the bereaved mother. All search for Eustace proved unavailing; and the remainder of the night was passed in anxiety. Agatha, overcome with fear and excitement, would not retire until tidings should come from one now so dear to her.

The sun was just glinting the tops of the loftiest trees above the eyrie, when a rider was seen dashing over the prairie. Then another and another, flying hither and thither in unaccountable confusion. It was a strange sight—unaccountable to all. Soon, from the direction of Cæsar's cabin, another horseman shot out like an arrow, and away over the grass he flew, toward the dozen or more disordered men. They all

stay their steeds, as if at a signal; and then comes up faintly to the hill a single note—"hoo-ho-o-o!" As if moved by a common impulse, all the horsemen dash off after their leader—all toward Cæsar's cabin.

It was wild and strange; it seemed like a vision of specters, and the household scarcely dared to guess its import. Mr. Linwood looked to his arms, but Cæsar smiled and said:

"Dat is good Sachem on de trail, sure."

It was indeed the Indians, for, ere long, the fleet Matchless was seen coming rapidly up the hill, with the still half-dressed Eustace upon his back, while, close at her heels, followed the Sachem and his braves, mounted upon their hardy ponies. The group gathered on the porch welcomed them with a great shout; it was answered by the red-skins in one wild whoop of delight. Not the least delighted was the good priest of the tribe, whose black robe was plainly seen scouting the plain along with the mysterious horsemen.

All was soon explained. Discovering the abduction, Eustace had at once flown to the Indian village, conscious that they alone could follow the trail. His was one of great peril, but Matchless bore him safely. The old chief, with a dozen of his best men, at once answered the call. They rode for the plain to strike the trail. It was their careering over the plain which had so excited the household on the hill. Tim Ruggles, seeing the scouts at work, guessed their purpose, and dashed from the spot to call in the Indians.

It was a gay party there gathered. The kitchen turned out its delicious aroma of coffee and luscious viands. A great table was extemporized on the green, and soon all were in the midst of a festivity of the true backwoods style. At the head of the table sat the good priest, with the Sachem upon one hand, and Mr. Linwood upon the other. Cæsar had his seat of honor there too. Who better deserved it?

When the feast was over, Mr. Linwood led Agatha and Eustace forward; and there, before that crowd of admirers, the twain were made one by the astonished missionary, while the equally astonished couple moved and spoke as in a dream—all was so strange, so unexpected, so thrillingly sweet. Mr. Linwood had conceived and executed the little surprise as a fit termination to the events of that most memorable day

None but Cæsar knew of his design ; and the joyous black, when the ceremony was ended, was seen to seize Leo by the fore paws, when the two went dancing around the grass. oblivious to all. The example was infectious. In a moment the Indians were moving in the mazes of their wild marriage-feast dance. All the crowd joined, and such another "break-down" Illinois never has since witnessed.

We draw aside the curtain upon our *dramatis personæ*, to disclose the fruits of our story. The Cedars is now the home-
stead of the Godlove family. Grandfather and grandmother Linwood are the inmates of the old mansion, through whose chambers echo the voices of little ones, five in number. Over these a "joint protectorate" exists, in which Cæsar is not an unknown party. That noble fellow, having repaired the desolation wrought by his slave master, has grown in worldly goods ; his house and grounds are worthy of a prince that he is. About a year after the events narrated above had transpired, his "free papers" came, signed by the younger Tourville, then the possessor of his father's estate—the free gift of an honorable man. In front of Cæsar's house is a mound surmounted by a stone bearing the inscription : "Sacred to the name of Leo, Cæsar's companion and Agatha's guardian." Not far away is the neat white cottage which Tim Ruggles calls his own—the lands a present from the lordly Sachem, whose daughter makes Tim a most devoted and bewitching wife. The memory of Jasper Linwood has almost perished ; its mention is such a discord in the harmony of sweet souls that it is rarely breathed.

And thus all is peace under the shadows of the Cedars.

THE END.

